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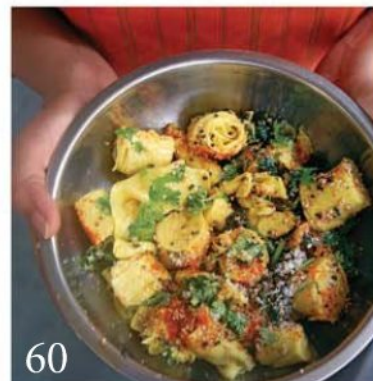
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50

Cover Pineapple-chipotle-glazed ham. PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL KRAUS

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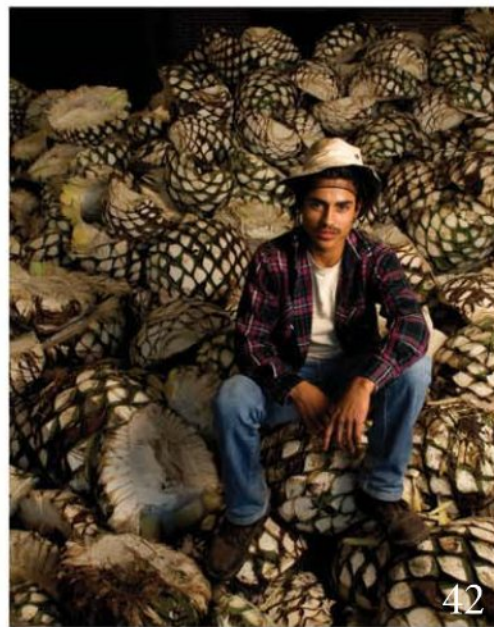
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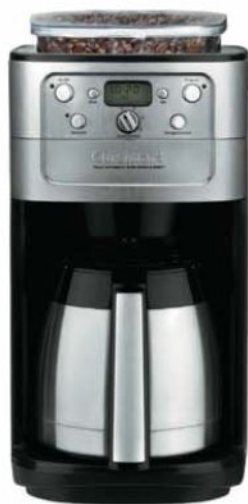


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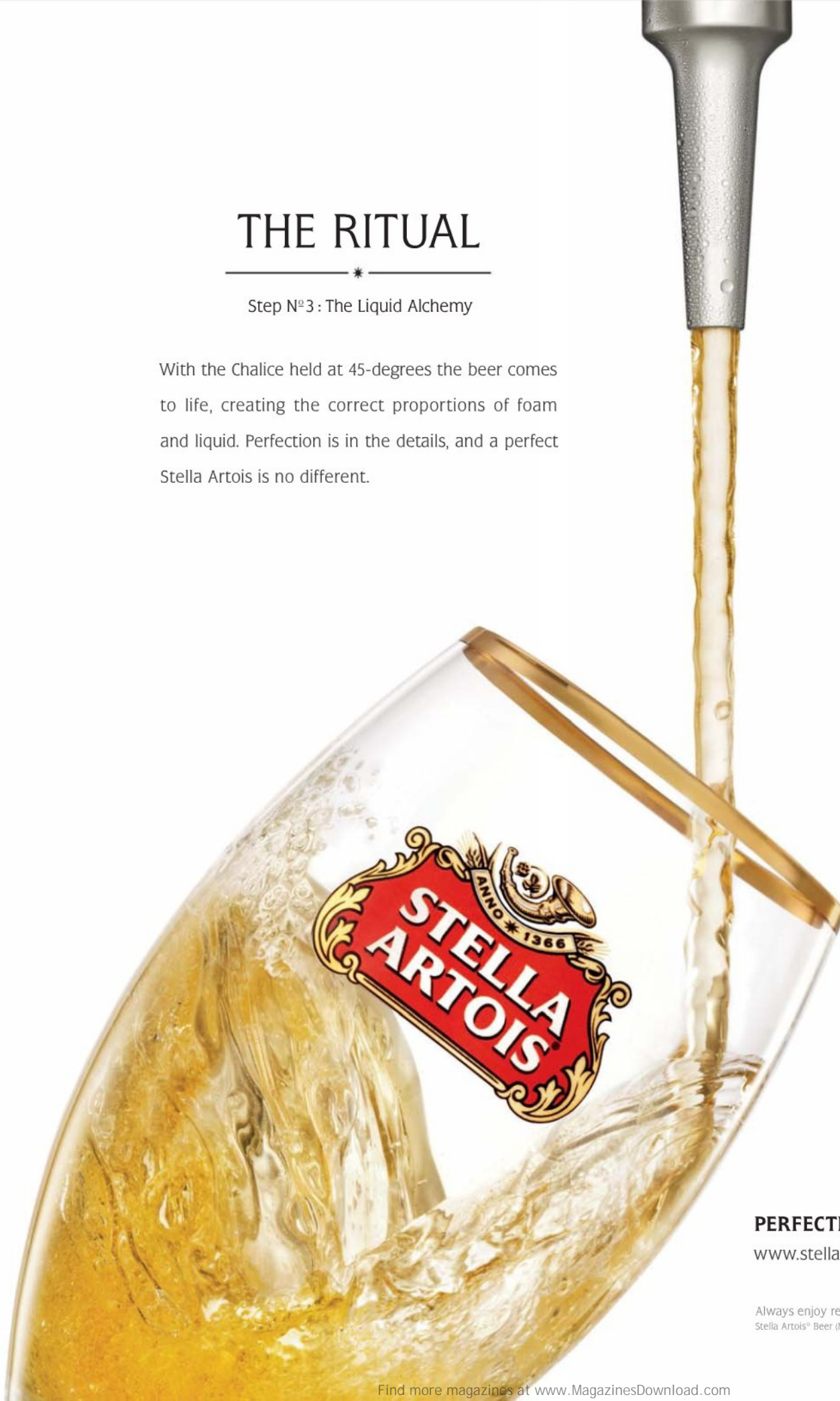


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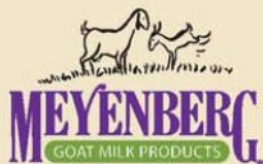
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FIRST

Gracious Plenty

Generosity is the essence of the holidays—and of cooking itself

OF THE THREE FEATURE stories in this issue of *SAVEUR*, “Flavor’s Realm,” on page 60, may not seem like the most obvious article to run at this time of year. Given that the December installments of American food magazines are usually chockablock with lavish holiday menus, it might come as a bit of a surprise to find a story celebrating the fiery-hot cuisine of the Indian state of Gujarat. In fact, no article could be more appropriate to the spirit of the season. The article was born in July 2008, when

Charu, home cooks who spoke passionately about the philosophies underpinning Gujarati cooking. I felt it in the kitchen of Manisha Shah, another cook whom Todd had arranged for us to meet (she’s pictured below right, with her friend Madhuri Shah); her knowledge of local techniques and flavorings (such as those shown in the *masala dabba*, a Gujarati version of a spice rack, pictured below left) humbled me. And I felt it as we were served a spare but glorious meal on the farm of Jayantilal Patel, who had happily



I accompanied *SAVEUR*’s executive food editor, Todd Coleman, on a ten-day visit to Ahmada-bad, Gujarat’s biggest city. I was there to take photographs, but for Todd the trip was a sort of vision quest. He’d been obsessed with Gujarati cuisine for years, and he was determined to gain a deeper understanding of it.

Before we’d even checked into our rooms, it started: hungry after our flight from Mumbai, we decided to go straight to Agashiye, a restaurant we wanted to try. I was instantly blown away by the bounty placed before us—dish after spectacularly executed dish, spiced and cooked and presented with a level of thoughtfulness and care worthy of a three-star restaurant. And it didn’t stop there. As our travels continued, that initial elation repeated itself again and again as people opened up their homes to us. I felt it in the kitchen of Sangam Mehta and her mother,

allowed me to tromp around his fields of millet and mustard seed earlier that day.

By the time we returned from our trip, the idea of including a story about Gujarat in our upcoming holiday issue seemed a foregone conclusion. What could better capture the spirit of the season than the unquestioned giving and sharing Todd and I encountered there? We have other, more traditional December articles in this issue—executive editor Dana Bowen’s expansive tribute to holiday ham, and a piece about Sweden’s exceptional Christmastime sweets—but, like Todd’s Gujarat article, they strive to convey what *SAVEUR* has always strived to convey in its 15 years of existence: the greatness of what cooks all over the world accomplish in their kitchens, on Christmas or just any old day of the year.
—JAMES OSELAND, Editor-in-Chief



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FARE

Celebrations and Stories from the World of Food, plus Agenda and More

Winter's Old Friend

Welcoming Tom and Jerry back to the table

A DECADE AGO, my wife, Karen, and I spent Christmas in Orange County, California, where we accompanied her brother David to a friend's beach house for cocktails. Given the sunny clime, I figured we'd be sipping margaritas. So, I was stunned when David's friend handed me a Tom and Jerry, a frothy drink of brandy, rum, beaten eggs, hot milk, sugar, and spices. A cousin of eggnog served warm rather than cold, the Tom and Jerry was once one of America's most popular Christmastime tipples, but it fell out of fashion in most parts of the country in the early 20th century. As it turned out, David's friend was from Michigan, and there—and in the other states bordering the Great Lakes—interest in the drink has never flagged. You can find excellent versions at places like the 172-year-old Schwabl's, in West Seneca, New York, near Lake Erie.

The Great Lakes states' devotion to the Tom and Jerry owes in part to the region's tough win-

ters; served warm and shot through with cinnamon, allspice, and cloves, the drink thaws chilled bones. But credit must also be given to Jerry Thomas, a bartender who was born on the shores of Lake Ontario circa 1830. Despite the similarity between the drink's name and his, Thomas did not invent the libation; it was probably named for two characters in the 1821 English novel *Life in London*. But Thomas was the Tom and Jerry's most tireless promoter. He served it at the many saloons he operated in cities across the country; he even had pet white rats named Tom and Jerry. By the late 19th century, special Tom and Jerry bowls and mugs had become wintertime fixtures in American bars (see "Vintage Cheer," below). Those days are gone, but for me the Tom and Jerry (see page 16 for a recipe) hasn't lost its power to comfort the body and heart, even at a California beach house. —David Wondrich



VINTAGE CHEER That winter drink of yore—the Tom and Jerry—has left a curious legacy: the Tom and Jerry serving set. In the late 1800s, barkeeps beat eggs, rum, and spices in special bowls inscribed with the name of the drink, ladling the foamy liquid into cups, nicknamed shaving mugs, to be topped with more liquor and hot milk or

water. By the 1930s and '40s, Fire-King and other manufacturers were mass-producing colorful milk-glass and ceramic versions. So many were made that the sets—like the ones shown here, from the collection of a New York City bar called Tom and Jerry's—are easy to find on eBay and in antiques stores today. —Betsy Andrews

TOM AND JERRY

SERVES 12

The batter for this winter warmer can be ladled from a punch bowl into glasses, as on page 15.

- 2 eggs, separated
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. cream of tartar
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups plus 2 tsp. dark rum
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup superfine sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. ground allspice
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. ground cloves
- $4\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups cognac, preferably VSOP
- Freshly grated nutmeg

In a large bowl, whisk egg whites and cream of tartar to stiff peaks. In another bowl, whisk yolks, 2 tsp. rum, sugar, cinnamon, allspice, and cloves until thick. Working in 2 batches, fold egg whites into yolk mixture. Cover bowl with plastic wrap; chill batter. To serve, heat milk in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-low heat; keep warm. Put 1 heaping tbsp. batter into a mug; stir in 1-2 tbsp. each of cognac and rum. Fill mug with 6 tbsp. milk; stir until frothy and garnish with nutmeg.

Perfect Parcels

The best holiday foods come gift-wrapped

MY VIETNAMESE-born parents were Catholics who celebrated Christmas, but they never taught us to believe in Santa Claus. The closest we ever came was the time another burly fellow bearing gifts showed up on Christmas Eve 2001, and by then we were grown-ups. That was the year Cruz Bonilla Vasquez, a barrel-chested man who



worked for my dad's landscaping business, appeared at the door of my parents' house in San Clemente, California, carrying a tray of warm tamales that his family had just prepared. They had gone all out: fillings included pork, chicken, beef, and even cinnamon. Feeling like children with gift-wrapped presents, my siblings and I tried to guess the filling inside each, untying the tamales and taking a bite to see whether we were right.

We played that game for five Christmases, until Cruz and his family decided to spend the holidays in Mexico and there were no more tamales for us. It was such a letdown that I eventually took matters into my own hands. Two years ago, while working on a book about Asian dumplings, I realized

that sticky rice wrapped in banana leaves, a food found throughout Asia, is like a tamale. So, for my family's Christmas Eve dinner, I made a batch of *kao tom padt*, Thai rice packets that are a traditional gift for religious ceremonies. I enriched the rice with coconut cream and hid a piece of banana in the center; then I tied each packet



with a banana leaf ribbon. At dinner, the *kao tom padt* were eaten in a flash, the discarded leaves left piled on the table like used gift wrap. Sure, such snacks are more typically served in many Asian homes during the Lunar New Year, but when you've created such perfect packages, it's hard to resist playing Santa Claus. —Andrea Nguyen

KAO TOM PADT

(Banana-Coconut Packets)

MAKES 12 PACKETS

This recipe for the dish (shown below left) comes from *Asian Dumplings* by Andrea Nguyen (Ten Speed Press, 2009). For hard-to-find ingredients, see page 106.

- 12 fresh or frozen banana leaves
- $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups coconut cream
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- Kosher salt, to taste
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups short-grain sticky rice, soaked for 6 hours, drained, and rinsed
- 3 firm-ripe bananas, quartered lengthwise

1 Cut each leaf into a roughly 12"x 14" rectangle, then cut scraps into 12 thin ribbons for tying; set aside. Combine coconut cream, sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water, and salt in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring, until it begins to bubble, about 2 minutes. Add rice; cook, stirring often, until most of the liquid is absorbed, about 7 minutes. Remove from heat; let rice absorb liquid, about 20 minutes. Divide rice into 12 equal portions.

2 Working with 1 banana leaf at a time, arrange leaf with a short edge parallel to you, smooth side up. Put a portion of rice in center; top with a banana quarter; press gently. Shape rice into a rectangle. Fold leaf ends over rice to make a packet. Tie with a ribbon. Repeat to make 12 packets in all.

3 Pour water into a wide-bottomed pot to a depth of 1". Set a colander inside pot. Working in 2 batches, steam packets until firm, about 15 minutes.



One Good Bottle

Young vintage ports can be quite tannic—especially the 2003 vintage, produced during a too-warm growing season. But, unlike other Portuguese fortified wines from that year, the 2003 Croft Vintage Porto (\$28) is delicious and alluring, perhaps because its grapes were crushed not by machine but by foot—a method that lends the wine softness. The result is a purple beauty with a theme of cherries and chocolate and a velvety texture. Drink it now with dark chocolate or in 20 years for a memorable cheese course. —David Rosengarten



WHATEVER THE OCCASION



ALWAYS RIGHT





French Holiday Feast

The late Christmas Eve dinner known as the *réveillon de Noël*—like the one pictured here, at the home of a Parisian family, circa 1976—is central to holiday celebrations in France. Traditionally eaten after midnight mass but enjoyed in countless secular homes, the meal often goes late into the night and, for me, symbolizes the near-sacred importance the French accord a big, leisurely, multicourse repast. The menu varies from place to place. The first *réveillon* I attended, in the southern city of Aix-en-Provence in 1989, featured an abundance of shellfish, including cockles, mussels, and lobster, and a staggering array of sweets, among them nougat, fresh and dried fruits, and the soft, almond-and-candied-fruit confections known as *calissons*. For many Parisians, oysters and foie gras are considered *de rigueur* as a first course, but opulence isn't necessarily the point of the meal. Omelettes have long been popular as a main course, as has roasted chicken or capon. If there can be said to be a single, universal element to a *réveillon* dinner, it would be the *bûche de Noël*, the ornate sponge cake Yule log turned out by the thousands in the days before Christmas by bakeries across the land. —David McAninch

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The Deli Man

The holidays bring a pro out of retirement

WHADDAYAWANT, LADY?" Harold Horowitz shouts across an array of cold cuts, salads, hot dishes, and pâtés. "To say hello to my boyfriend," his customer replies flirtatiously. "When did you get back? How's your wife?"

"She's getting younger," Horowitz jokes, deftly slicing bris-



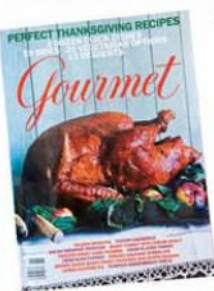
ket and wrapping it neatly in deli paper quicker than you can say, "Gimme half a pound."

Horowitz, 81 (pictured above in 1995), is in his element. During the busy holiday season, he returns from semi-retirement in North Carolina to manage the deli counter of Zabar's, the specialty foods store in New York City where he's worked since 1974. Back then, the deli case was only as long as his outstretched

arms. Today it's more than 40 feet across and contains more than 500 different foods. Saul Zabar, the second-generation owner of the 75-year-old family business, says the success of the store's highest-grossing department owes in part to Horowitz. Over the years, Horowitz has cut jokes and meats with equal skill, sourcing and preparing an ever expanding range of foods. He was the guy who kept suppliers on their toes, rejecting pastrami that was unevenly cured or too salty or fatty. He was also the innovator who suggested new ways to move underselling products like chilled smoked ham. "I said, 'Let's sell 'em warm,'" recalled Horowitz. "We now sell 60 or 70 a week."

In the 1930s, when Zabar's was founded, New York City was home to some 1,500 kosher delis, where Jewish immigrants purveyed the foods of their Eastern European origins, raising their children to carry on the businesses. "When I was a kid," Saul Zabar says, "there was a deli every three to four blocks." Today, there is only a handful across the city. "The cost of rent is too high," says Zabar, and seasoned pros like Horowitz—who started in the business as a boy at his family's grocery stores—are increasingly rare assets. But Zabar hasn't had to coax this deli man back behind the counter; Horowitz returns of his own accord every holiday season. "I miss the action," he says with a shrug. —Hunter Lewis

One of a Kind Since we heard the news in October that *Gourmet* was ceasing publication after 68 years, we've mourned along with the rest of the food world. Over the years, *SAVEUR* and *Gourmet* have shared many writers and even swapped a few editors, and we've been driven by the same mission: to publish unforgettable stories about the world of cuisine. And yet, *Gourmet*'s absence leaves a hole no other publication could fill. Starting in 1941, *Gourmet* invited readers to see cooking as an imaginative and intellectual pursuit. Through the words of M.F.K. Fisher, James Beard, and other great writers, we gained a deeper understanding of what it means to eat. *Gourmet* has been the benchmark for all food publications; its archive remains an invaluable resource. Still, it's hard to believe that someone won't find a way to bring *Gourmet* back. Until then, we wait with hungry minds. —The Editors



AGENDA

DECEMBER

2

Birthday:

MARIA CALLAS

New York City, 1923

The opera diva (right), born Maria Cecilia Sophia Anna Kalogeropoulos, was a passionate recipe collector who teased secrets from chefs and replicated classic dishes, such as the beef carpaccio from Harry's Bar in Venice. There's even a cookbook drawn from her huge library, *Maria Callas: La Divina in Cucina*, available only in German.



DECEMBER

4-19

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS AT MEADOWOOD NAPA VALLEY

St. Helena, California

Celebrated chefs from around the country, among them Marcus Samuelsson and Laurent Gras, will partner with top Napa Valley vintners to create a series of 12 unique holiday feasts at the wine country resort Meadowood. A portion of the proceeds benefits the hunger relief organization Share Our Strength. Information: www.meadowood.com.



DECEMBER

7-10

DAIKO-DAKI (BOILED RADISH FESTIVAL)

Kyoto, Japan

To bring health and good luck, Kyoto temples cook daikon radishes, which are eaten to prevent colds. At Senbon Shaka-do temple, monks use edible ink to paint talismanic symbols in Sanskrit onto the daikon. At Ryotoku-ji temple, worshippers sup on daikon braised in soy sauce and dashi. Information: 212/757-5640.

DECEMBER

11-13

FESTIVAL OF THE BONFIRES

Lutcher, Louisiana

Every Christmas Eve, bayou families build bonfires on the Mississippi River levees, lighting the way for Papa Noël, who, according to legend, travels in a flat-bottomed boat powered by alligators. This fund-raiser, which helps finance the blazes, includes a gumbo cook-off, Cajun music, and, of course, bonfires. Information: www.festivalofthebonfires.org.



DECEMBER

31

NEW YEAR'S EVE PICKLE DROP

Mount Olive, North Carolina

The Mt. Olive Pickle Company hosts revelers who've come to observe the dropping of a three-and-a-half-foot luminescent plastic pickle from the top of the company's flagpole into a redwood pickling barrel. Prior to the seven o'clock (midnight GMT) pickle drop, celebrants dance the pickle polka and crunch on complimentary dills. Information: www.mtolivepickles.com.

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STATE PLATES: VERMONT

Wheel and Barrel

Vermont's long tradition of blue-ribbon cheese making has been matched in recent decades by an effervescent craft-beer-brewing scene. Happily, the state's cow, goat, and sheep cheeses go splendidly with many of its beers. Below, five of our favorite pairings.

Wolaver's certified organic **India pale ale** with Twig Farm's **tomme**, an aged raw goats' milk cheese.

Long Trail Double Bag **dark amber ale** with Bonne Bouche, an **aged, ash-ripened, pasteurized goat cheese** from Vermont Butter and Cheese Company.



Malty Trout River **Scottish ale** with Vermont Shepherd **raw, aged sheep's milk cheese**.

Vermont **American barley wine** from Rock Art Brewery, with Grafton Village Cheese Company's **clothbound cheddar**.

Knockout **imperial stout** made by McNeill's Brewery with Bayley Hazen Blue, a **raw-milk blue cheese** from Jasper Hill Farm.



7 GREAT EATS

Corn bread French toast and **roasted turkey hash** at Bennington's Blue Benn Diner.

Swiss chard soup followed by **local, country-fried quail** at the Inn at Weathersfield in Perkinsville (pictured near top left and middle).

Sausages and pâtés from local, free-range pork and veal at Ariel's Restaurant in the town of Brookfield.

Hot mulled cider and **fresh cider doughnuts** at Cold Hollow Cider Mill in Waterbury.

More Vermont specialties at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE125

Rabbit braised in riesling cream sauce at Michael's on the Hill, near Stowe.

The **St.-Honore**—caramel-coated, custard-filled pastry atop *pâte à choux*—at Rainbow Sweets in Marshfield.

Farmhouse dinners, plus classes in cheese making and preserving, at Shelburne Farms on Lake Champlain.

(See THE PANTRY, page 106, for info on visiting Vermont and on purchasing Tom and Jerry sets, Croft Vintage Porto, and frozen banana leaves.)

Pastoral Pleasures



IN A STATE AS PROUDLY rural as Vermont, farmers are a close-knit bunch, and the communities they call home are wellsprings of exceptional dairy, breads, fruits, vegetables, and meats. In these small agricultural towns—places that have given rise to nationally known brands like Ben and Jerry's and Cabot Creamery—community spirit is the backbone of Vermont's robust food culture. Farm-to-table cooperatives like the Vermont Fresh Network source local ingredients for restaurants throughout the state, and schools like the Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese are training the next generation of cheese makers and other food producers. —Karen Shimizu



RIISING ART One of Vermont's busiest bread makers, Peter Schumann, is founding director of the 38-year-old **Bread and Puppet Theater**, whose actors animate towering papier-mâché figures in farcical plays with politically progressive themes. Schumann devotes equal attention to the group's other endeavor: sourdough rye bread, which he learned to bake from his mother in his native Silesia (now part of Poland). Schumann took the recipe with him when he emigrated to the U.S. in 1961, and today at his troupe's Glover, Vermont, farm, he bakes loaves from hand-milled rye in an outdoor clay oven to share with audiences after each show.

BED, BREAKFAST, AND MORE

Guests eat and sleep equally well at many of Vermont's inns. At the 214-year-old **Rabbit Hill Inn** (right) in Lower Waterford, chef Matthew Secich creates dishes like local duck with wild berry compote. The **Inn at Lareau Farm**, along central Vermont's Mad River, houses American Flatbread, serving its famous wood-fired specialties. And, in Warren, the **Pitcher Inn** offers world-class wines, along with dishes prepared with Vermont-raised lamb, quail, and rabbit.



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SOURCE

Cool Canes

These sweets provide instant cheer

BY SUSAN WEINSTEIN

I COULD TELL JUST BY GLANCING at the candy canes from Zoë's Chocolate Company that they were a breed apart from the shrink-wrapped sticks sold by the millions during the holiday season. I'd heard that this small confectioner in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, was one of the last in the country to make candy canes entirely by hand, and I'd decided to make the trip from my home in Washington, D.C., to try them for myself. There they were, a rainbow of pretty canes, all secured with a shiny ribbon. No two looked alike; each lustrous candy had contours and patterns that couldn't possibly have come from a machine. I bought a few of each kind: peppermint (in red, green, and white stripes), anise (blue, red, and white), and cinnamon (red and white).

On the way home, I opened up a peppermint one and popped it into my mouth. The flavor was bright and refreshing, cool on the tongue, and more refined than the cloyingly sweet taste of the canes I'd grown up eating. The real stars, though, were the anise and cinnamon versions. The latter had all the gentle warmth of the spice but none of the aggressive heat you get in most cinnamon hard candies, and the anise cane, which had a gorgeous sheen, tasted of real licorice. I finished the whole thing.

As its name suggests, Zoë's Chocolate Company makes primarily chocolates, and very good ones. But every year in the weeks leading up to Christmas, the owner, Zoë Tsoukatos, gets together with her parents and two brothers to make candy canes, observing a tradition begun two generations ago by Tsoukatos's great-aunt and great-uncle, immigrants from Greece. "When I was a little girl," she recalls, "I would wait all year for candy cane-making time. I loved it then, and I love it now."

Tsoukatos says that the method hasn't changed a bit. "We still use natural oils for the flavoring and knead the candy by hand." Each batch of the taffy-like candy base is pulled and stretched on a wall-mounted hook before the flavoring is added; then the colored pieces are twisted onto the white base. Zoë's mother, Elaini, oversees the job of bending each cane into the crook shape. "She has the magic touch," says Tsoukatos. A pack of six candy canes costs \$16.50; visit www.zoeschocolate.com or call 717/387-5882. 🐦

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—Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE

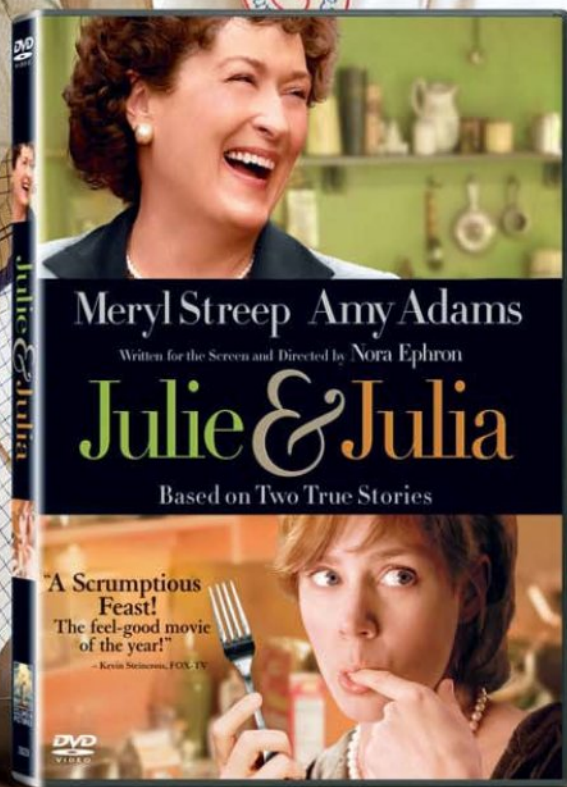


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ESSAY

Faith and Bacon

A pork lover considers religious food taboos and her family's ways around them

BY FRANCINE PROSE

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP in Brooklyn in the 1950s, my family—assimilated Jews, one generation removed from the more or less observant households in which my parents came of age—didn't eat pork. Even at the neighborhood Chinese restaurant, where everyone ate pork, we ordered the sweet-and-sour chicken. Pork was the forbidden food.

That is, unless you counted bacon. Bacon wasn't really pork. And the harder and crispier

the bacon, the less pork it was. I think I was in high school when it finally dawned on me that those tasty, curly, carbonized strips had once been attached to an actual pig. Not that I cared. By then I had long suspected that my family's private version of Jewish dietary laws—no pork, except for overcooked bacon—had less to do with keeping God's commandments than with finding a way to combine old habits with the desire to raise healthy children. The then-prevalent idea that

kids needed to start the day with a calorific, protein-rich breakfast that often included bacon seemed to trump whatever the Old Testament said about cloven hooves or chewing cud or the pure and the impure.

Bacon was just the beginning for me. It was a college boyfriend who introduced me to the glories of pork roast: oh, the crackly skin, the sweet flesh, the sheer carnal pleasure to be had for (in those days) a ridiculously low price! Thus began a romance that outlasted, by decades, my interest in the guy who led me down the garden path to the pigpen. By this point I've come to feel that hardly anything compares to pork, and I have to wonder why Judaism, Islam, and so many other religions and religious sects consider such a delicious thing so profane. A friend once told me that if you reduce the joys of pork to its essentials—crispy, fatty, juicy, salty—it explains why duck has sometimes been referred to as "Jewish pork." In which case, is duck also Muslim pork? Is chicken fried steak Seventh-Day Adventist pork? And do members of religions and castes that forbid meat altogether think of battered, fried eggplant as Brahmin pork?

VARIOUS THEORIES HAVE been put forward to explain the multicultural taboo against pork consumption. For a while, it was thought that the avoidance of pork reflected a fear of pigs as vectors of disease, a nervousness hardly assuaged by even the most casual observation of their diet (garbage), domestic preferences (mud), and occasional willingness (let me put this as delicately as possible) to ingest their

FRANCINE PROSE is the author of more than 20 books, including *Anne Frank: The Book, the Life, the Afterlife* (HarperCollins, 2009). Her most recent article for *SAVEUR* was "In Deepest Italy" (May 2009).



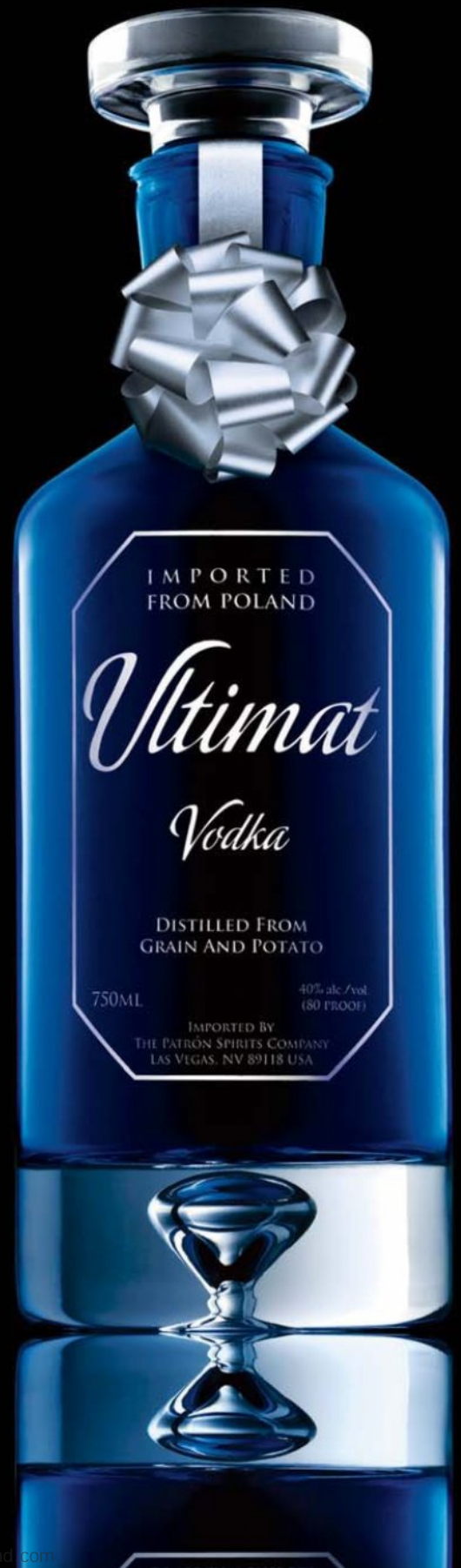
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own waste. My mother was so afraid of raw pork that she thought that unless we kept a close watch on the careless butcher who might accidentally grind the beef for our hamburgers in a machine that had just been used for making pork sausage, we would all be doomed to an agonizing death-by-tainted-hamburger. After all, my aunt knew someone who knew someone who knew someone who had died of trichinosis—a parasitic illness transmitted in undercooked pork. It's no wonder my bacon was always fried to a crisp.

But it has also been argued that many of the unsavory habits of pigs are also indulged in by chickens; as far as I know, only vegetarians won't eat poultry. And, though widely considered edible, goats are hardly famous for their tidiness or discriminating food choices. Besides, considering the limitations of scientific knowledge in ancient times, it would have been unlikely for the Hebrews and Egyptians to make the association between a pork dinner and an illness like trichinosis that might not manifest itself for days or even weeks. What should be clear by now is that, if you research the topic of food taboos in the library or on the Internet, you can rather quickly get sucked into a vortex of debate about meanings of the word *impure* that go well beyond the realm of health and science.

Anyone who has survived high school will be inclined to agree that food taboos have something to do with the seemingly hardwired and ineradicable human impulse to clump together in groups and invent arcane membership rules to exclude others. If we are what we eat, we are also what we don't eat, and others are what they do and don't eat, and so forth.

Food has always, obviously, been part of how we define ourselves. We tell ourselves that we're the kind of people who fill our supermarket carts with healthful fruits and vegetables and not with jumbo bags of Cheez Doodles and snacks sweetened with corn syrup. When you alter your diet, and especially when you break the laws that govern your diet, you change your identity. There's a moment in Philip Roth's novel *The Plot Against America* when the narrator's older brother Sandy comes home to New Jersey after having spent the summer on a farm in the South, where he's eaten pork chops, ham, and bacon for the first time. He's become a different guy. The fierceness and readiness with which we identify others with what they do or don't eat

has led to all manner of bad behavior, ranging from racist slurs (the inexplicably resilient urban legend of Chinese restaurants' serving cat) to cruelty (mosques are said to have been washed down with pig blood in the course of the Indian partition in the 1940s) to torture (during the Spanish Inquisition, Jews were forced to choose between eating pork and being put to death).

Years ago, in Paris, I watched a series of nightly television documentaries in which, during each installment, a different farm couple in a different region of France was shown slaughtering a pig in the most humane way, using methods that evoked a proud history of animal husbandry and first-class sausage making. A few weeks later, a French friend told me that these picturesque, seemingly innocent documentaries had a political purpose. Their

IT WAS A COLLEGE BOYFRIEND WHO INTRODUCED ME TO THE GLORIES OF PORK ROAST: THE CRACKLY SKIN, THE SWEET FLESH, THE SHEER CARNAL PLEASURE TO BE HAD FOR (IN THOSE DAYS) A RIDICULOUSLY LOW PRICE

aim was to encourage French citizens to vote in the coming elections for the candidates who promised to defend their ancient peasant heritage against the incursion of immigrants, many of whom didn't eat pork.

One of the most intriguing and sensible theories of why some of us don't eat pork was argued in an essay called "The Abominable Pig" (Waveland, 1985) by the American anthropologist Marvin Harris. In his view, the proscription against pork is founded on a rational if intuitive grasp of ecology and of the food chain, as well as a gently Darwinian approach to the necessities of supply and demand. The trouble with the pig, says Harris, is that it is not a grass-eating ruminant, an important distinction that sends us back to see what the Bible says about the clean and the forbidden. According to Leviticus 11, "These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the land animals: any animal that has true hooves, and that chews the cud.... [T]he swine—although it has true hooves, with the hooves cleft through, it does not chew the cud: it is unclean for you."

Not chewing the cud is the deal breaker, Harris suggests. He traces this rationale to the



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fact that in the increasingly arid Middle East, the pig's fondness for shady, wooded spots as opposed to open grasslands became harder to satisfy, and its insistence on being fed grains meant that it was competing with its human owners for their daily bread. How much easier and more practical it was to coexist with (and eventually eat) cows, which, unlike pigs, gave you milk, butter, and cheese, which grazed on vegetable matter that humans weren't interested in consuming (like grass), and which had proclivities that were much more, well, tolerable—mooing instead of grunting, trotting after the herdsman instead of rolling in the mud—but not so lovable as those of domestic pets, the eating of which is also forbidden in most cultures.

Harris's ecological explanation sounds reasonable to me, and I'm touched by his confidence that our species will instinctively do the right thing for our survival. If he fails to convince me entirely, it may be because human behavior in more recent centuries has made me question his faith in our willingness to suppress our baser appetites (whether for

delicious pig or yummy fossil fuels) for the benefit of other humans, flora, and fauna. And I can't help wondering how anyone can take such a functionalist approach to two of the most subjective and irrational subjects that exist—namely, food fears and religion.

**WHAT BETTER WAY TO TEST
PEOPLE'S FAITH THAN TO
FORBID THEM TO EAT
SOMETHING THAT SENDS OUT
MOUTHWATERING
AROMAS FROM THEIR
NEIGHBOR'S KITCHEN?**

According to *A Drizzle of Honey* (St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson's book on the cooking habits of Jews who practiced their religion in secret during the Spanish Inquisition, a woman named Isabel de Rivera was brought before inquisitors in Mexico in the 17th century. Jews, she informed the court, can't eat pork "because pigs are men who have been cursed by God, and until pigs rejoin the blessed, one

cannot eat them."

ISABEL DE RIVERA'S fantastical explanation may be as good as any. If food historians, anthropologists, and cultural theorists have failed to find the definitive source for the widespread interdiction against pork (and for other dietary taboos), it may be because religious food prohibitions, like religion itself, are mysteries based on mysteries. It's all about following the dictates of a faith that transcends science and logical explanation. It's about belief. These days, Jews who keep kosher and Muslims who observe the laws of halal may tell you that they have enough trust in the USDA to assume that they probably won't contract parasites from a slice of mortadella. And except for a few highly focused experts, rabbis, mullahs, and scholars, the faithful likely don't have much interest in hoof formation or the ingestion of grasses.

Though I know that it can't possibly be true, I've often wondered whether the prescription against pork might have something to do with how supremely delicious it is.



Welcome to Kendall

FROM THE BEST LAND COMES


What better way to test people's faith than to forbid them to eat something that sends out such mouthwatering aromas from their neighbor's kitchen or, more likely, their neighbor's desert encampment? Is it any wonder that the world's major religions, at least as far as I know, don't prevent their followers from eating any number of less universally popular items—for example, Brussels sprouts?

However they feel about Brussels sprouts or the aromas of cooking pork, most people who keep kosher or follow halal principles do so first and foremost in order to feel they are fulfilling the wishes of God or of Allah. Living according to these guidelines generates, for them, a kind of perpetual mindfulness, an awareness of how a close relationship with God can permeate and govern even the most humble aspects of daily life—the food shopping, the cooking, the eating. To break a dietary law is to transgress not only against the will of God but against a way of life that provides comfort, order, sustenance, and a sense of awe that for some of us is as necessary as respiration.

Certainly that's how it was in my family. My parents' old religion (their inherited Judaism) had to make room for their new religion (postwar American approaches to raising healthy children), and a compromise evolved. When I got old enough to interrogate my parents about their selective aversion to pork, even I knew better than to ask them why they had pretended that the bacon we ate practically every day might have come from some other animal completely. They never attempted to claim that it made any logical sense. It was a matter of faith, and it belonged to their religion—their own, private one.

Ironically, now that one of my own culture's prevailing beliefs—that is, the belief in a sensible, low-fat diet—has practically become a universal article of faith, my own family has come almost full circle back to a certain wariness about the health risks of pork. Quite honestly, I hadn't noticed how much of it my husband and I were consuming until our daughter-in-law remarked to our son, "Gee, your mom and dad eat an awful lot of bacon." And after my husband's cho-

lesterol count confirmed the implications of her observation, we scaled back on the breakfast meat and the pasta *alla carbonara*. But however much we want to protect our hearts, we're just as reluctant to break them by giving up bacon completely.

I understand why others find comfort in faith. Though I sympathize with their longings and sometimes envy them the consolations that sustain them, I myself have fallen away from religion—my own and everyone else's. That's partly because of the intolerance with which the world's religions so often seem to encourage their members to treat members of other faiths. But if, however unlikely it seems, I ever find myself making one of those late-life turns toward God, one thing I can promise you is that this God will be a deity who wants me to feel exactly the way I feel when the marbled slice of pork floats to the top of the bowl of ramen or when the platter of sliced suckling pig arrives, crisp and moist, emitting curls of fragrance and steam that carry a message of bliss along the length of the table. 

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REPORTER

The *Chienbäse*, a torchlit procession preceding the Fasnacht carnival in Basel, Switzerland.

A large bonfire of logs at night, with bright orange and yellow flames reaching high into the dark sky. Sparks and embers are falling from the fire. In the foreground, several people are visible, some wearing fireman's helmets and heavy coats, holding long wooden poles. The scene is festive and intense.

Wild Times

Madness reigns at a Lenten carnival

BY DAVID MCANINCH

I'D BEEN WALKING THE damp, cobblestoned streets of Basel, Switzerland, for hours, and it wasn't even dawn yet. Every few seconds I had to duck into a darkened doorway to allow drummers and piccolo players in giant harlequin masks to march by. The Lenten-season carnival known here as Fasnacht officially kicked off at four in the morning, but I'd been going steadily since the night before, when I watched the *Chienbäse*, a pre-Fasnacht procession of men and boys in firemen's helmets carrying huge cords of flaming pinewood perilously close to timber-framed buildings. My hair still smelled of smoke, and my coat had holes in it where embers from the burning pyres had landed. My feet were freezing. Now seemed as good a time as any for breakfast.

On a side street above a square called Barfüsserplatz, I could hear men singing—a little off-key but with no shortage of feeling—and detect the tantalizing aroma of sautéed onions. The sound and scent were coming from an open doorway above which hung a handmade sign that read KÄLLER. I walked down a corridor, descended a twisting staircase, and emerged into a barrel-ceilinged chamber packed wall to wall with revelers, mostly men, mostly in yellow fat suits adorned with red

poms. Oversize masks were stacked in a corner. The venue recalled a bomb shelter, albeit a festive one. When I walked in, one costumed guy slid over on his bench to make room for me.

The singing had stopped, and everyone was now being served slices of *Zwiebelwähe*, a delicious, bacon-studded onion tart you can get almost everywhere in Basel during the carnival. I ordered a slice, and it restored me right away. When I'd finished, the man to my left offered me a snort of snuff. "It'll keep you warm out there!" he announced, though he made the point that *he* never got cold. "It's genetic," he said. "My mother marched and played piccolo at Fasnacht when I was in the womb."

I knew that Basel, a city of 200,000 people in northwestern Switzerland, was home to hundreds of *Käller* like this one. These private cellar bars, open to the public during Fasnacht, serve as the year-round headquarters of the venerable Fasnacht parade clubs, or *cliques*, of which no fewer than 10,000 residents of Basel and its environs are members. Eating my onion tart, I realized that this was how the people of Basel recharged during their three-day carnival, which is more extravagant and finely orchestrated than other Lenten fests in Europe that go by the same name or similar ones, such as Fasching in Munich. Day and night, the *clique* members march in formation in heavy costumes and, when they require rest and respite from the elements, descend with their mates into a *Käller* for food and drink perfectly designed to provide fuel for marching in the chill of late winter.

Later that afternoon, after a nap that was terminated by the sound of fifes and drums, I tromped around near the banks of the Rhine under a bruise-colored sky, admiring the exquisitely painted lanterns carried by the *cliques*, and then retreated to the gaily adorned *Käller* of a parade club called Rätz Stadt. Amid confetti-flecked marchers, I sat down to a bowl of silky, peppery *Mehlsuppe*, a simple concoction of beef stock, browned flour, and butter that warmed me to the marrow. It came with a fresh-from-the-oven slice of *Käsewähe*, a fluffy cheese tart made with tangy Gruyère, and a chilled glass of pale red schwarzriesling wine from the Baden region that was light on the palate and just right for a midafternoon meal.

Refreshed, I explored Basel's postcard-pretty old quarter and beheld a city transformed. Every restaurant, café, and bakery was festooned with ribbons and bedecked with masks, drums, lan-

terns, and other Fasnacht paraphernalia. The pastry shops had really gone all out. The window of Confiserie Schiesser, a bakery facing Basel's central Marktplatz, was a gallery of carnival sweets so lavish as to put me off fasting for the rest of my life: doughnut-like *Berliner*; raisin-studded pastries called *Osterflädli*; colorful *Massmoge*, or hazelnut candies; plus tortes, truffle cakes, candied fruits, and dozens of hand-painted marzipan confections in the shape of *Waggis*, the Swiss folkloric characters associated with Fasnacht. I stepped inside and purchased a *Fasnachtskiechli*, a sugar-dusted, melt-in-your-mouth Lenten pastry—the refined European cousin of the funnel cake.

For the next couple of days and nights, I went with the flow, checking out the parade groups, attending the grand *Cortège*, during which the 500 or so formally recognized *cliques* march before members of the Fasnacht



organizing committee, and popping into the cellar bars for *Zwiebelwähe* and *Mehlsuppe*. Then, just as I was getting used to being surrounded at all times by people in masks and jester's outfits, the whole affair ended—precisely 72 hours after it began. By nine o'clock the next morning, city workers had swept away every last piece of confetti and the trams were filled with briefcase-toting men and women clutching their *Basler Zeitung*, the local newspaper. The doors to all the *Käller* would be closed to nonmembers until preparations began for the next year's Fasnacht. I'd have killed for a slice of onion tart, but instead I decided to get some sleep, the sound of piccolos still singing in my ears. 🐼

THE PANTRY, page 106: Travel and lodging information for the Basel Fasnacht carnival.

ZWIEBELWÄHE

(Swiss Onion Tart)

SERVES 8-10

The salty, smoky ham known as speck is a traditional ingredient in this tart; bacon is a good substitute.

FOR THE CRUST:

- 1½ cups flour
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter, chilled and cubed

FOR THE FILLING:

- 3 oz. speck or bacon, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1½ lbs. white onions (about 3), finely chopped
- Kosher salt to taste
- ½ cup milk
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 3 eggs
- 3 oz. grated Gruyère or Swiss cheese
- Freshly ground black pepper and freshly grated nutmeg

1 Make the crust: Pulse flour, baking powder, and salt in a food processor to combine. Add butter and pulse until pea-size pieces form. Add ¼ cup ice-cold water; pulse briefly. Transfer dough to a floured work surface; form into a disk. Wrap in plastic wrap; chill for 1 hour.

2 Heat oven to 425°. Transfer dough to a floured work surface. Roll dough into a 13" circle; transfer to an 11" fluted tart pan with a removable bottom, pressing into bottom and sides. Trim excess dough; chill for 30 minutes. Prick bottom of dough with a fork; cover bottom with a sheet of parchment paper; fill with dried beans. Bake until crust is set, about 20 minutes. Remove paper and beans; bake until crust is light brown, about 15 minutes. Let cool.

3 Meanwhile, make filling: Cook bacon in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat until crisp, 7-8 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a plate. Discard bacon fat; add butter. Add onions and season with salt; reduce heat to low, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 10 minutes. Uncover; cook until lightly browned, 10 minutes. Let cool.

4 Whisk milk, cream, and eggs in a bowl; add reserved bacon and onions along with cheese. Season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Pour filling into tart; place on a baking sheet. Place tart in oven and reduce heat to 400°. Bake until filling is golden brown and set, 45-50 minutes. Transfer tart to a wire rack to let cool completely before slicing and serving.

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KITCHENWISE

Personal Space

An editor's kitchen reflects a lifetime

BY JUDITH JONES PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID BRABYN

I LIKE TO WALK into a kitchen and feel that the space expresses the personality of the cook who inhabits it. Too many kitchens today seem like sterile laboratories—there's no one home. As an editor, I've had the privilege of working with many different cookbook writers, and I am always interested in how their kitchens reveal something about their approach to cooking—the particular array of spices on their shelves, the utensils they use the most, the aromas that linger in the air.

I first became aware of the presence of personality in a kitchen when Julia and Paul Child returned from Europe in the early 1960s to settle in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They renovated the large kitchen in an old New England house and hung on the walls all the copper pots and pans Julia had brought back from Paris. Later, I noted how the Middle Eastern food expert Claudia Roden's kitchen in London reflected her memories of growing up in Cairo, where all the women of the house would gather to make mezes and gossip. The relatively small room, brightened by

Middle Eastern tiles, opened onto a generous, cluttered space with a long wooden table where you could sit down and chat and peel fava beans. And I could always detect the heady scents wafting from the tiny kitchen of Indian cookbook author Madhur Jaffrey's modern apartment in New York City even before I rang the doorbell. Her ability to have all four burners going, with bowls of dals and chutneys kept out of the way in cramped cabinets and ready to go, was almost an acrobatic feat, but she always knew where everything was and remained undaunted. More recently I've been learning the art of sushi making in the sleek kitchen of noted Japanese culinary authority Hiroko Shimbo; it is a model of efficiency and gleaming cleanliness. The big rice cooker is always filled with sushi rice ready to be scooped up, and there is a central worktable full of ingredients carefully laid out, reflecting the balance of color and texture that is so important to Japanese cooking.

In 1970, when my husband, the author Evan Jones, and I bought the co-op apartment where I grew up, on Manhattan's Upper East

JUDITH JONES has edited a wide variety of cookbook authors including Julia Child, James Beard, and Edna Lewis. She is the author of *The Pleasures of Cooking for One* (Knopf, 2009).





Side, I knew what kind of kitchen I wanted—modeled on Julia's but expressive of us. The building was constructed in the early 1900s, when architects allowed fairly ample space for hired kitchen help (our kitchen measures about eight by ten feet). Separating the kitchen and dining room was a convenient pantry, with its own sink, intended as a place for the maid to wash glasses. There was also a small, diamond-shaped window in the door to the dining room that allowed her to see when it was time to bring out the next course. At first, the distance the pantry created between the dining room and the kitchen seemed a problem, and we tried to break down some walls to bring us closer to our guests, but there were too many ancient pipes embedded in there, and we had to give up. In the end it turned out to be a blessing; we made the pantry into a cozy dining area, where we put a round marble café table for two and hung our own copper pans, which cast a warm glow when we ate by candlelight.

From the start we wanted to preserve the timeless look of the old kitchen while making it more workable. Like many New York kitchens of bygone days, ours had cabinets that reached way up to a high ceiling. Of course, you needed a ladder to fetch things from the top shelves, but those cabinets provided a great storage place for seldom used equipment, and they hung high over the counter, allowing for some pegboard space underneath. We kept two of those, just sprucing them up with new doors, and replaced the rest with accessible open shelves where I could keep, in handsome glass jars, staples such as rice, dried beans, grains, dried mushrooms and chiles, and spices. What old kitchens like ours lacked was counter space, so we added some along three of the walls so that we could work together without getting in each other's way.



Clockwise from top left: a pegboard installed above the kitchen sink creates room for hanging pots and pans; author Jones's cookbook collection is stored in the dining room and in the apartment's hallways; dining in the old pantry area; open shelves on one wall of the kitchen hold clear jars of dried goods, permitting Jones to see in an instant what ingredients are running low; sautéing eggplant on Jones's nearly 40-year-old Garland stove.

One of those counters, under a wide window, had a backsplash extending along its length, in front of the deep windowsill. When this section was installed, we realized that in walling off that windowsill, we had inadvertently created

what the French call a garde-manger, a cool spot beneath a kitchen window where fresh foods can be tucked away. During the time we lived in Paris in the late 1940s and early '50s, most of the apartments we rented were without refrigera-

tors but had garde-mangers, so our improvised version in New York held a certain nostalgic charm. I still use ours all the time in cooler months to stash away dried fruits and nuts and chocolates—things that need a slight chill.

The pride of the kitchen is the six-burner Garland stove, which has served me well now for almost 40 years. With its wide oven and high heat, I am able to simulate a baker's oven and make crusty baguettes and the occasional pizza. It is a blessing in every way.

But a kitchen is never finished, and I'm still adding useful items, such as a small marble-topped worktable, which has shelves to hold my most frequently used cooking essentials; I spotted the table not long ago in the window of a Gracious Home store near our apartment. I have it tucked alongside the Garland, so I can do all my prep right next to where I cook. When I started writing my most recent book, *The Pleasures of Cooking for One* (Knopf, 2009), a project that began to evolve after my husband died, in 1996, I realized that an important part of reducing recipes and making them work in single portions lies in adjusting the pan size, so I relegated my big equipment to the top parts of the cabinets and hung smaller tools close to the stove: my four-cup Le Creuset pot, my trusty eight-inch iron skillet, a small wok, and an omelette pan. Then, when I was ready to cook, everything was right at hand, whether I was making an Indian curry or a Chinese stir-fry or an Italian pasta dish.

Above all, my kitchen is a part of me. It keeps me efficient and, particularly now that I cook mostly for myself, inspires me to be creative, to have fun with whatever I am making. When I sit down to a nicely laid table in the old pantry, I light the candles, pour myself a glass of wine, and feel that I am honoring the past as I enjoy a good dinner. 🍷



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DRINK

National Spirit

In Oaxaca, artisan distillers are making mezcals worth savoring

BY ST. JOHN FRIZELL

ONE NIGHT LAST FALL in the Mexican city of Oaxaca, I spent several hours in a shoe box-size bar called Mezcalería Los Amantes. I'd arrived just before closing, and I told the owner, a painter named Guillermo Olguín, that I'd like to taste some very fine mezcal, the spirit distilled from the fermented hearts of the agave, a succulent native to Mexico. After the last of the other customers had left, he began pulling down the good stuff: handblown bottles containing obscure artisanal mezcals from all over Oaxaca State, the traditional center of mezcal making. These were serious spirits, wild and unrestrained, a far cry from the mellow top-shelf tequilas and cheap mezcals I'd known in the United States. Olguín had collected them on motorcycle trips throughout southern Mexico, and for him each one was a postcard of the landscape and of the *palenquero*, or mezcal maker, who had created the spirit. There was a bizarre mezcal from Yauatepec with a perfumed nose; an elegant and scotch-like mezcal that delivered sweet smoke on the palate; and one made from *tobalá* agave that was rich and slightly bitter, with flavors of chocolate and coffee. "The *palenqueros* are artists, and this is the gallery," Olguín said, gesturing to his bottle-laden shelves.

Mezcal is the national spirit of Mexico, first made by pre-Columbian peoples who roasted and fermented the spiny agave plant (also known as maguey). Over time, distinct regional styles of mezcal developed, and the one traditionally made near the town of Tequila, in the state of Jalisco, became the most popular. Oaxacan mezcal can be made from a number of different species of agave, including the hardy *espadín* and the prized *tobalá*, a tiny wild-mountain variety. By law tequila may be made

with only one species, the blue agave, and in the past few decades tequila production has become increasingly mechanized: the agave is cooked in steam ovens and shredded by machines. Sugars, enzymes, and commercial yeasts have been introduced to the making of tequila, and while the resulting spirit is smoother than traditional mezcal, it's also less expressive of the place where it's made and of the plants that grow there. A few distillers in Oaxaca use industrial processes to make mezcal, but true aficionados seek out handcrafted spirits like the ones I was tasting with Olguín, made in the pueblos of the Oaxacan hills by men using traditional methods that haven't changed in generations.

Jonathan Barbieri is one such aficionado. I

THESE WERE SERIOUS SPIRITS, WILD AND UNRESTRAINED, A FAR CRY FROM ALL THE MELLOW TEQUILAS I'D KNOWN

met the expatriate American artist two years ago at a dinner party in the Oaxacan courtyard of a mutual friend. After the meal, Barbieri brought out a bottle and poured a round of mezcal. The smoke of a wood fire filled my nose as I raised my glass, and a succession of flavors—wet slate, salt, passion fruit, pineapple, lavender—coursed across my palate. Barbieri, who had been selling bottles of the mezcal out of the trunk of his car, revealed that it was made by a man named Don Faustino Sanchez, who lives in San Baltazar Chichicapam, a town of 2,700 inhabitants southeast of Oaxaca City.

On a subsequent visit to Mexico, I persuaded Barbieri to take me to meet the old *palenquero*. Don Faustino Sanchez's still is kept in a garage beside his house; chickens roam the muddy yard between the buildings. The still house's freshly poured concrete floor and new wooden vats are recent improvements—Barbieri and other investors paid for them, in the hope that

Sanchez can increase production; they plan on selling Sanchez's mezcal, called *Pierde Almas*, all over Mexico and eventually in the United States.

Sanchez sat in a wheelchair, his sun-beaten features framed by a wide, white cowboy hat, and recalled first learning how to make mezcal at his grandfather's knee when he was five years old. His family has done a good local business, pouring the spirit straight from the still into plastic bottles, ceramic jugs, even gas cans—whatever his customers brought with them to hold it—though it wasn't always legal to do so.

For centuries, mezcal production has suffered under various prohibitions and taxes, starting with an outright ban, imposed by the Spanish government in an effort to bolster its brandy and wine exports, that lasted through much of the colonial period. As recently as the 1970s, Mexican fiscal agents destroyed the stills of mezcal makers who hadn't paid taxes, forcing many *palenqueros* underground. Today, though, the production of artisanal mezcal in Oaxaca is becoming a legitimate enterprise, thanks in part to the efforts of an American businessman named Ron Cooper.

I recently paid a visit to Cooper at his office, tucked in a courtyard off calle Macedonio Alcalá, the main street of Oaxaca. Tanned and loose limbed, Cooper splits his time between Taos, New Mexico, and Oaxaca, where he first traveled as a young artist in 1970. On return trips, he met the *palenqueros* who inspired him to start Del Maguey, a company that bottles a line of mezcals, four of which are named for the Oaxacan villages in which they're produced, and sells them in the United States.

"It's slow, slow, slow, all the way," Cooper says. "With every step you speed up, you lose

ST. JOHN FRIZELL is the owner of *Fort Defiance*, a café-bar in the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York.

A farm worker sitting atop newly harvested hearts of the agave plant, the raw material for mezcal.



flavor.” Agave planted today will be ready to harvest in about ten years. The spiny plants are harvested by hand, with machetes, and the heart of the agave, the part used for making the liquor, can weigh up to 120 pounds. The hearts are split open and piled into a pit, called a *palenque*, which is filled with rocks heated by a wood fire, then covered with earth. They cook underground for several days, until their flesh becomes syrupy, sweet, and redolent of wood smoke. The hearts are removed from the pit and piled in the shade to cool for a week before being mashed, typically in a shallow circular well with a millstone pulled by a horse. The mash is then transferred to wooden vats where it’s left in the open air to ferment naturally from four to 30 days before being transferred to a still—typically made of copper—to undergo two distillations that take about 24 hours each.

For one of Cooper’s *palenqueros*, Don Florencio Carlos Sarmiento, even this process isn’t hands-on enough. He refuses to use draft animals and metal equipment, believing they would affect his spirit’s delicate flavor. One afternoon, at Sarmiento’s *palenque* outside of

of a movement. Today, a handful of other aficionados, among them Guillermo Olguín, the bar owner I’d met, are bottling different styles, from clear, bracing *jovens* to amber, barrel-aged *reposados*, for sale outside Mexico. Their enthusiasm has prompted a sort of gold rush in the Oaxacan hills, with importers combing the countryside for the best *palenqueros*. Once discovered, their secrets remain closely guarded. When I asked the name of the man who makes Del Maguey’s superb *tobalá* mezcal, Cooper stonewalled. “I cannot reveal that,” he said. “He is too valuable a treasure.”

Tasting Notes

Forget about the shot glass: these mezcals are made for sipping. Most of them are new to the U.S. market, but they’ve been distilled in small towns in the Mexican state of Oaxaca for generations. *Reposado* mezcals are aged lightly in wood barrels before bottling; they’re more restrained than the typical unaged, or *joven*, mezcals, and perhaps more approachable for the mezcal initiate. —S.J.F.

Los Amantes Reposado (\$65). After a curiously tropical nose of banana with hints of taffy, this *reposado* is clean and tight, calling to mind the high sierra: smoldering pine needles and dry, warm stone.

Los Danzantes Reposado (\$60). Strong cereal notes belie this spirit’s agave origin; dried corn, puffed rice, and new leather dominate the nose. A heavy, almost syrupy body brings the taste of maple, pecan, and brown butter.

Del Maguey Chichicapa (\$70). A *joven* made by one of Del Maguey’s longtime *palenquero* partners, Faustino Garcia Vasquez. Exceptionally clean and distinct herbal flavors, with a sharp minerality.

Del Maguey Pechuga (\$200). This is Del Maguey’s special seasonal *joven*, distilled with fruit, nuts, and, surprisingly, a raw chicken breast. A bracing nose of wildflowers, mint, and violets leads to a long, simmering finish of cinnamon, clove, prunes, sweet smoke, and mild camphor. Remarkable.

Del Maguey Tobalá (\$125). Made from the prized wild *tobalá* agave, this *joven* can be placed among the world’s finest. Each invigorating sip offers unexpected but harmonious flavors: cake icing and old leather, lime rind and cocoa, beeswax and salted caramel. Mezcal—at least the stuff that’s sold in the States—does not get better than this.

Sombra (\$49). One of the first mass-market artisanal mezcals, Sombra kicks off with a heavy scent of ash and wet earth, along with a faint touch of green grass. This *joven* is comparatively mild on the palate, with notes of black pepper, garden herbs, salt, and sweet citrus.

THE AGAVE HEARTS COOK FOR SEVERAL DAYS, UNTIL THEIR FLESH BECOMES SYRUPY, SWEET, AND REDOLENT OF WOOD SMOKE

Santa Catarina Minas, Cooper and I watched as three generations’ worth of Sarmiento men mashed cooked agave using big wooden bats called *masos*, while one of them stoked the fire under small clay stills. Cooper bottles two mezcals from Sarmiento’s stills: straight mezcal and a special style called *pechuga*. The latter is made each winter by combining distilled mezcal with fruits, including wild apples, plums, bananas, and pineapples, as well as Mexican cinnamon and almonds. Just before the still is sealed, Sarmiento hangs a single raw chicken breast over the mezcal–fruit mixture. Cooper doesn’t know how this tradition started or precisely why Sarmiento continues it. “I asked him once, ‘Why a chicken?’” Cooper told me. “He said that if he didn’t use the chicken, the *pechuga* would be too fruity.”

In 1990, when Cooper first headed north across the U.S. border in a pickup truck piled high with bottles of mezcal after a three-month trip to Oaxaca, he planted the seeds

THE PANTRY, page 106: Sources for artisanal mezcals.



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The only thing German about German chocolate cake is its name

BY NICK MALGIERI

CONTRARY TO POPULAR belief, there's nothing German about German chocolate cake, that dark and decadent triple-decker dessert topped and layered with a buttery frosting laden with shredded coconut and pecans. The sweet is a purebred creation of mid-20th-century America. More specifically, it is the brainchild of a Mrs. George Clay of Dallas, Texas, who submitted a recipe for "German Sweet Chocolate Cake" to the *Dallas Morning News* in 1957. The paper ran the recipe, and it caused such an enthusiastic response that newspapers around the country reprinted it. Within a few years, Sara Lee was selling a frozen version and Betty Crocker developed a packaged mix.

Many people took it on faith that the cake was German in origin, but even a cursory examination would have undermined that assumption: traditional German-style layer cakes are usually filled with whipped cream, jam, or both, and coconut and pecans are par-for-the-course Southern dessert ingredients. So, whence the name? Like many desserts of the postwar era, the cake called for a store-bought product, in this case German's Sweet Chocolate, an ingredient originally manufactured by the venerable Walter Baker & Co. of Dorchester, Massachusetts. (The product's name was derived from that of Samuel German, who developed the chocolate for the company back in 1852, adding to it an optimal amount of sugar for baking.) In fact, desserts made with German's Sweet Chocolate, such as "German Chocolate Pie," custards, and puddings, had been popular since the latter half of the 19th century. But it was Mrs. Clay's recipe that put German's Sweet Chocolate on the map. Within a year of the recipe's publi-

cation, Walter Baker & Co. capitalized on the cake's popularity by printing a recipe for German chocolate cake on every box of its sweet chocolate. Today the company (now owned by Kraft) sells more than 1.7 million boxes—still bearing the recipe—each year.

I'm not much of a back-of-the-box baker, but I recently decided to give the official recipe a try. Making the cake layers was simple enough: I beat the butter and sugar, added the egg yolks and melted chocolate, and then added the flour-baking soda mixture and some butter-



milk. Finally, I whipped the egg whites and folded them in. The only tweak I made was to reduce the amount of sugar by a quarter cup; considering that the frosting contained equal parts sugar and evaporated milk, I figured the dessert would be plenty sweet already. Indeed, the cake's traditionally unfrosted sides made total sense; any more of the silken frosting would have been overkill given the richness of the cake itself. In the end, the only ingredient I wanted more of was chocolate, which seemed upstaged by all the other ingredients. The next time I made the cake, I added a few more ounces. Perfection. I'm sure Mrs. Clay wouldn't have minded. 🐦

GERMAN CHOCOLATE CAKE

SERVES 14-16

- 3 cups sugar
- 1 3/4 cups unsalted butter, softened
- 2 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 8 large egg yolks
- 1 12-oz. can evaporated milk
- 1 1/2 cups roughly chopped pecans
- 1 7-oz. package sweetened shredded coconut
- 4 oz. German's Sweet Chocolate, chopped
- 2 oz. unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 4 large egg whites

1 Combine 1 1/2 cups sugar, 3/4 cup butter, 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla, 4 egg yolks, and evaporated milk in a 2-qt. pan over medium heat. Bring to a simmer; cook until thick, 12 minutes. Strain through a sieve into a bowl; stir in pecans and coconut; chill frosting until firm.

2 Heat oven to 350°. Grease three 9" round cake pans with butter; line bottoms with parchment circles. Grease parchment; set aside. Put chocolates into a small bowl; pour in 1/2 cup boiling water; let sit for 1 minute. Stir until smooth; set aside. In another bowl, whisk flour, baking soda, and salt; set aside.

3 In a standing mixer, beat 1 1/4 cups sugar and remaining butter until fluffy; add remaining egg yolks one at a time. Add chocolate mixture and remaining vanilla; beat until smooth. On low speed, alternately add flour mixture and buttermilk until just combined; set batter aside.

4 Meanwhile, whip egg whites to soft peaks. Add remaining sugar; whip to stiff peaks. Fold egg whites into batter; divide between pans and smooth batter. Bake until cakes are set, 25-30 minutes. Let cakes cool; frost the top of each cake and assemble, leaving the sides bare.

NICK MALGIERI is the author of *The Modern Baker* (DK Publishing, 2008), among other books. His most recent article for *SAVEUR* was "Vienna's Sweet Empire" (March 2009).

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PUEBLA

MOLE POBLANO IS JUST THE BEGINNING

BEYOND BEING AN ARCHITECTURALLY RICH CAPITAL CITY IN A STATE FULL OF NATURAL BEAUTY, **PUEBLA** ENJOYS A REPUTATION AS A FOOD LOVER'S PARADISE.

The city's thrilling blend of pre-Hispanic and colonial ingredients — along with unique techniques — is embodied in its most iconic dish: *mole poblano* ("mole from Puebla"). The thick, rich, spicy brown sauce is best known in the United States for including a touch of chocolate, but its list of ingredients can be two dozen long and includes indigenous items like chiles, nuts, and tomatoes, as well as colonial imports like cloves and apple. Every restaurant, household, and cook makes it slightly different. One cook's tradition — adding ripe plantain, for instance — might seem heretical to another. However prepared, mole is always as delicious to eat as it is arduous to make.

But the glorious *mole poblano* gives just an inkling of the culinary delights you'll find in Puebla. Stroll through markets where vendors stand proudly behind mountains of *chicharrones* (curls of crunchy, fried pork skins) and piles of dried chiles in more colors and sizes than you can imagine. Sidle up to a stall and order a *cemita*, a Dagwood-style sandwich that layers pork, cheese, avocado, and *papalo* (a pungent herb) on a crusty, sesame seed-flecked roll. Or choose a *chalupa*: a freshly made corn tortilla topped with shredded meat and spicy red or green salsa — and named for the boats the Aztecs once piloted. But save some of your appetite. There's plenty more to eat.

Another striking indigenous dish is *chiles en nogada*, deep-green poblano chiles stuffed with meat and covered in a lush, snowy-white sauce made from nuts. A sprinkle of tart, crunchy pomegranate seeds makes a tasty addition, and ensures that all the colors of the Mexican flag are represented. Don't miss the region's sweet treats, such as candies made from unexpected ingredients like pumpkin seeds or sweet potato.



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A SWEET TRADITION

IN SWEDEN, CHRISTMASTIME IS ALL ABOUT SUGAR AND SPICE

BY REBECCA FISHER PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD COLEMAN



Chocolate truffles. Facing page, Swedish fruitcake. Previous pages, gingerbread cookies (left) and saffron buns (right). (See pages 58 and 59 for recipes.)





Peppermint caramels. (See page 59 for a recipe.)



WHEN I WAS GROWING UP in Ohio, during the 1970s, my mom used to make something called a Swedish tea ring every Christmas. She wasn't Swedish; the recipe came out of her trusty old *Betty Crocker Cookbook*. It was a pretty thing, a wreath of braided yeast bread that she decorated with green and red candied cherries. The first time I brought my Swedish boyfriend, Mans, home for the holidays, in 1989, I was eager for him to try it. He was polite, as ever, but clearly unimpressed.

It wasn't until Mans and I went to Sweden to visit his parents for Christmas the next year that I understood why. The moment we arrived at their home in the small southern town of Lund on a frigid mid-December morning, I was enveloped by the warm, wintry smells of baking—butter, cinnamon, nutmeg, yeast. I had barely removed my coat before Mans's mother, Waimi, handed me a cup of strong black coffee and sat me down before a platter of sweets, including whimsically shaped gingerbread cookies, luscious-looking sponge cakes, chocolate fudge, and caramels. A few hours later, we all took another sweets-and-coffee break, and then another in the afternoon. In the evening, Mans's old friends stopped by with tins of their own home-baked cookies and candies, and his parents' sweets were hauled out again, this time with steaming cups of *glögg*, Sweden's beloved spiced wine. I never did encounter anything called a tea ring, but the sweets I tasted that day have since become as cherished a part of the holiday for me as anything I grew up with.

Over the 20 years that I've been traveling to Sweden with Mans (now my husband) and, more recently, with our two young daughters, Alma and Lina, I've come to understand that Swedish Christmas desserts are about more than just satisfying a sweet tooth. Swedish cooks are typically skilled at baking; during the holidays, they tend to go overboard. The urge to bake feels natural in Sweden at this time of year, with *glögg* simmering on the stove by early afternoon, when the sun is already setting. Candles are lit. Jokes and stories are told while cookies are decorated. At my in-laws' house, baking is worked into the course of the day as comfortably as cooking is, and everyone pitches in.

It was Mans's father, Lars-Göran, who became my teacher during our first holiday visits; not only does he speak English well, but, with his gentle manner and dry sense of humor, he strikes me as an older version of my husband and puts me at ease. "We have an old wives' tale in Sweden," Lars-Göran told me on an early visit, "that says if a visitor leaves your house without enjoying some food or drink, the Christmas spirit will leave with him." To prevent that from happening, he said, most families bake lots of different kinds of sweets. Then he produced a battered copy of a little book called *Sju Sorters Kakor* (*Seven Kinds of Cakes*), explaining that it is the most trusted source for classic holiday sweets recipes and has been a best seller in Sweden since the 1940s. I've since bought my own copy (the English version is called *Swedish Cakes and Cookies*; it was published in 2005 by ICA), but for years I had Mans write down recipes from his parents' well-worn edition.

By far the most popular Christmas sweet is *pepparkakor*, spicy, clove-scented gingerbread cookies that are cut out in traditional Swedish

Yuletide shapes. Mans's family usually bakes ten dozen *pepparkakor*, enough to last through Christmas. We glaze some with icing and string them with ribbons to hang on the tree, but most we leave plain. The key to making *pepparkakor* is to roll the dough wafer thin so that they bake up crisp and break with a snap. Over the years, my daughters and I have been perfecting our dough-rolling skills, not only for cookies but also for *pepparkakshus* (gingerbread houses), which we decorate to the hilt with candies and frosting each year. Last year, Lars-Göran surprised us by making a perfect *pepparkakshus* replica of our town house in Brooklyn, New York, complete with chimneys, skylights, and a front stoop.


Many of the sweets we bake are tied to specific days of the Christmas calendar. December 13, for example, is Lucia Day, when homage is paid to the Italian-born saint, who symbolizes the arrival of light—a precious commodity during the winter in Sweden. The day before, everyone helps to make *lussekatter*: fluffy, buttery buns that are tinted golden with saffron. It's said that the hue imparted by the saffron represents the return of the sun after a long, cold winter. On the morning of the holiday, girls across Sweden dress up as Saint Lucia in white robes and crowns made of lingonberry sprigs and candles and hand out the buns to everyone in their home. For obvious reasons, many young kids,

THE URGE TO BAKE FEELS NATURAL IN SWEDEN DURING THE WINTER: SPICED WINE SIMMERS ON THE STOVE, CANDLES ARE LIT, AND EVERYONE PITCHES IN

including my own, don battery-operated crowns.

At Mans's parents' house, the baking continues right up until Christmas. One day, we'll make *fruktkaka*, a crumbly fruitcake that's less dense and boozy than the American kind. The next, it'll be *rulltarta*—sponge cakes that are spread with cream or jam fillings and rolled into spirals—or *mandelmusslor*, delectable tartlets consisting of an almond-pastry shell filled with whipped cream and garnished with a dollop of Waimi's home-made gooseberry jam. Some of the prettiest sweets we make are bite-size, such as pieces of *polkagriskola*, a peppermint candy-studded toffee, and *kokosbollar*, chocolate-oat truffles rolled in shredded coconut.

By Christmas Eve, after all the season's parties and coffee breaks and visits to bakeries, most of us have had our fill of sweets. Following a smorgasbord lunch of herring, boiled eggs, and open-face shrimp sandwiches, we gather not in the kitchen for more baking but in front of the television, to take part in a curious Christmas Eve ritual observed throughout Sweden: watching *Kalle Anka och Hans Vänner Önskar God Jul* (*Donald Duck and His Friends Wish You a Merry Christmas*). This compilation of clips from classic Disney movies airs at three in the afternoon every Christmas Eve and has been a holiday staple in Sweden since the 1960s.

That night, after opening presents, we partake of one last Christmas indulgence: *risgrynsgröt*, creamy rice porridge. My daughters have come to love the tradition of leaving an extra bowl by the front door for the helpers of Jultomte, Sweden's Father Christmas, who need to be thanked at Christmas so that they'll protect the family's home in the coming year. The next morning, Alma and Lina always wake up to find the bowl empty—thanks to Mans, who has happily eaten every last spoonful. 

REBECCA FISHER is a freelance writer and editor based in Brooklyn, New York. This is her first article for SAVEUR.

THE PANTRY, page 106: Information on travel to Sweden.



Almond-cream tartlets.
(See page 59 for a recipe.)



①

A CHERISHED SPICE

The reddish orange and famously expensive spice known as saffron—which consists of the painstakingly harvested stigmata of the *Crocus sativus* flower—imparts its golden hue and faintly spicy flavor to a number of feast breads and holiday cakes in Sweden. Saffron first arrived in Sweden via trade with Asia in the 1300s and was traditionally reserved for holiday baking because of its extravagance.

There are a number of ways bakers extract color and flavor from the spice. Many steep the delicate strands in warm milk before adding flour and eggs to make their dough. Others grind the spice with sugar crystals. Some mix saffron with a bit of sugar and vodka to create a distilled extract. Always, the trick

is to use the precious spice sparingly.

Quite a few of the saffron-spiced sweets, like *Julkaka med saffran* ①, a raisin-studded Christmas cake, date back centuries, but there are also new saffron desserts, such as chocolate chip biscotti (*saffranskorpor med choklad*) ② that have become popular in recent years. *Lussekatter* ③ is a mildly sweet saffron bread baked in a variety of shapes, including braided or spiral buns (see page 58 for a recipe) and a cake-like version called *almogekaka* ④. Saffron is commonly paired with almonds and dried fruit, as in the *mandelkaka* ⑤, a rich, buttery almond-saffron cake. —Katie Robbins



②



③



④



⑤



PEPPARKAKOR

(Gingerbread Cookies)

MAKES ABOUT 48 COOKIES

Gingerbread cookies like these are popular in Sweden during the holidays. The sweets can be served plain, as shown above, or decorated with icing. This recipe comes from the 80-year-old Vete-Katten bakery in Stockholm.

- 3 ³/₄ cups flour
- 3 tsp. ground cloves
- 3 ¹/₂ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 ¹/₂ tsp. ground ginger
- 1 ¹/₄ tsp. baking soda
- 11 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- ¹/₂ cup golden syrup or dark corn syrup (see page 106)
- ¹/₂ cup heavy cream
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 egg white, lightly beaten

① In a large bowl, whisk together the

flour, cloves, cinnamon, ginger, and baking soda; set aside. In another large bowl, beat together the butter, brown sugar, and golden syrup using a handheld mixer set to medium speed until the mixture is pale and fluffy, 1–2 minutes. Add the reserved spice mixture and the heavy cream in 3 alternating batches, beginning and ending with the spice mixture, until the dough just combines. Transfer dough to a work surface, divide in half, and shape each half into a flat disk. Wrap each disk in plastic wrap; refrigerate for 1 hour.

② Heat oven to 350°. Unwrap 1 disk of dough and place on a floured work surface. Using a rolling pin, roll dough to a ¹/₈" thickness. Cut out cookies using the cookie cutters of your choice and place cookies 2" apart on parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Repeat with remaining dough, rerolling scraps. Refrigerate for at least 20 minutes. Bake cookies, 1 sheet at a time, until browned and set, about 12 minutes. Transfer cookies to a wire rack and let cool.

③ To make an icing, if you like, whisk confectioners' sugar, lemon juice, and egg white in a medium bowl until smooth. Transfer icing to a resealable plastic bag (or a pastry bag). Snip off a bottom corner of the bag and pipe icing onto cookies in a decorative pattern.



LUSSEKATTER

(Saffron Buns)

MAKES 32 BUNS

The secret to making these mildly sweet pastries—based on a recipe given to us by Gunilla von Heland, a food editor in Stockholm—is to steep the saffron in hot milk before incorporating it. For step-by-step instructions on how to roll the dough, see below.

- 2 ¹/₄-oz. packages active dry yeast
- 2 cups milk, heated to 115°
- 2 tsp. saffron, lightly crushed
- ³/₄ cup plus 1 tsp. sugar
- 6 ¹/₂ cups flour
- ³/₄ tsp. kosher salt
- 3 eggs
- 12 tbsp. unsalted butter, cut into ¹/₂" cubes, softened
- Canola oil, for greasing
- 64 raisins, for garnish

① In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle, mix together yeast, milk, saffron, and 1 tsp. sugar; let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes. Stir in

the remaining sugar, along with the flour, salt, and 2 eggs. Mix on low speed until dough forms and gathers around the paddle. Replace paddle with dough hook and add butter; knead on medium-high speed until dough pulls away from sides of bowl, 8 minutes. Transfer dough to a large bowl greased with oil and cover with plastic wrap; let rest in a warm place until doubled in size, 1 hour.

② Divide dough into 32 pieces and roll each piece into an 8"-long rope. Form each rope into an S shape and then roll each end into a tight spiral. (See below for illustrated step-by-step instructions.) Place shaped dough pieces 2" apart on parchment paper-lined baking sheets; cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place for 30 minutes.

③ Heat oven to 400°. Uncover the dough pieces and place a raisin at the center of each of the spirals. Lightly beat remaining egg with 1 tbsp. water and brush each bun with egg mixture. Bake until buns are golden brown and cooked through, 16 minutes. Transfer buns to a wire rack and let cool for at least 10 minutes before serving.



KOKOSBOLLAR

(Chocolate Truffles)

MAKES 36 BALLS

Adding rolled oats that have first been ground in the food processor helps hold these chocolate balls together while giving them an earthy note.

- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- ¹/₂ cup superfine sugar
- ¹/₂ tsp. kosher salt
- 2 oz. bittersweet chocolate, melted

SHAPING SAFFRON BUNS



Swedish saffron buns, called *lussekatter*, can be made in a number of traditional shapes; here's how to create the distinctive double-spiral form called for in the recipe above. ① Using a pastry scraper or a large knife, divide the dough into quarters, then cut each quarter into 8 equal-size pieces. ② Working with 1 dough piece at a time (and setting aside the remaining dough pieces on a baking sheet until you're ready to shape them), use your fingers to roll dough piece into an 8"-long rope. ③ Twist 1 end of the seg-

ment toward its center and curl the end into a tight spiral shape until you reach the middle of the rope. ④ Repeat with the other end, twisting in the opposite direction, so that you end up with an S-shaped pastry. Transfer shaped dough pieces, spaced 2" apart, to 4 baking sheets lined with parchment paper. Cover the baking sheets with plastic wrap and let the buns rise in a warm spot for 30 minutes. ⑤ When ready to bake, place a raisin in the center of each spiral.

- 6 **tbps. unsweetened natural cocoa powder**
- 2 **tbps. brewed espresso or dark coffee, at room temperature**
- 2 **tsp. vanilla extract**
- 2 1/2 **cups rolled oats**
- 1 **cup unsweetened finely shredded dried coconut (see page 106)**

Combine the butter, sugar, and salt in a large bowl and use a handheld mixer set to medium speed to beat the mixture until pale and fluffy, 1–2 minutes. Add the chocolate, cocoa powder, espresso, and vanilla and continue beating until combined, about 1 minute more. Place the oats in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until roughly chopped, about 5 pulses. Add the oats to the chocolate–butter mixture and mix until combined; refrigerate until chilled, 1 hour. Divide the chilled chocolate mixture into 36 portions using a tablespoon-size measuring spoon; roll each portion into a 1" ball. Place coconut in a shallow dish and roll each ball thoroughly in coconut; transfer balls to a baking sheet. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.



FRUKTKAKA

(Swedish Fruitcake)

SERVES 12

The Swedish name translates as fruitcake, but this light cake is only distantly related to the dense, sticky fruitcakes familiar to many Americans.

- 4 **oz. dried figs, finely chopped**
- 4 **oz. dried apricots, finely chopped**
- 4 **oz. raisins**
- 1/2 **cup dark rum**
- 1 **tbps. orange zest**
- 1 1/2 **tsp. lemon zest**

- 12 **tbps. unsalted butter, softened, plus more for greasing**
- 1 3/4 **cups flour, plus more for pan**
- 1 **tsp. baking soda**
- 1 **cup superfine sugar**
- 4 **eggs**

① Combine the figs, apricots, raisins, rum, orange zest, and lemon zest in small bowl; cover with plastic wrap and let sit at room temperature for at least 4 hours or as long as overnight.

② Heat oven to 350°. Grease the bottom and sides of a 12 1/4" x 4 1/2" x 2 3/4" loaf pan with butter and dust all over with flour; tap out excess and set aside. Whisk together the flour and baking soda in a medium bowl; set aside. Combine butter and sugar in a large bowl and beat with a handheld mixer set to medium speed until the mixture is pale and fluffy, 1–2 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the reserved fruit–rum mixture and the flour mixture and mix on low speed until just combined. Transfer batter to prepared pan and smooth the top with a rubber spatula. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the middle of the cake comes out clean, 40–45 minutes. Unmold cake onto a wire rack and let cool completely before slicing.



POLKAGRISKOLA

(Peppermint Caramels)

MAKES 64 CANDIES

This dessert, topped with crushed peppermint candies, is one of many versions of *kola*, a kind of semisoft toffee adored all over Sweden.

- 4 **oz. hard peppermint candies**
- 1 1/4 **cups heavy cream**

- 1 **cup superfine sugar**
- 6 **tbps. golden syrup or dark corn syrup (see page 106)**
- 3 **tbps. honey**
- 7 **tbps. unsalted butter**

① Put peppermint candies into a plastic bag and crush them coarsely with the flat side of a meat mallet. Using a large sieve, sift candy pieces, discarding powder; set candy pieces aside.

② Line the bottom of an 8" x 8" baking pan with parchment paper; grease parchment paper with nonstick cooking spray and set aside. Heat cream, sugar, syrup, and honey in a 6"-diameter 2-qt. saucepan over medium heat; stir until sugar dissolves, about 5 minutes. Bring to a boil and attach a candy thermometer to the side of the pan; cook, without stirring, until mixture reaches 250°, about 45 minutes. Remove pan from the heat and add butter. Using a wooden spoon, stir until smooth, about 3 minutes. Pour sugar mixture onto prepared baking pan and sprinkle evenly with peppermint candy pieces, pressing them lightly into toffee with the back of a spatula. Let cool completely; cut into 64 squares to serve.



MANDELMUSSLOR

(Almond-Cream Tartlets)

MAKES 32 TARTS

If you don't own clamshell-shaped pastry tins, you can use almost any two-ounce baking tin to shape the pastry crusts for these elegant desserts.

- 1/2 **cup whole blanched almonds**
- 1 **cup sugar**
- 2 1/3 **cups flour**
- 15 **tbps. unsalted butter, softened,**

plus more for pan

- 1 **cup fresh or frozen lingonberries (see page 106) or raspberries**
- 1 **tbps. fresh orange juice**
- 1 1/2 **cups heavy cream**
- 1/2 **cup vanilla sugar (see page 106)**

① Make the pastry dough: Put almonds into the bowl of a food processor and process until finely chopped. Add 3/4 cup sugar and process until very finely ground. Add the flour and pulse until combined. Add the butter and pulse until the dough begins to come together. Transfer dough to a work surface and knead briefly until smooth.

② Heat oven to 400°. Divide dough into 32 equal pieces, about 1 oz. each. Press each dough piece into the bottom and sides of a 2-oz., 1 7/8" x 1 3/8" clamshell-shaped baking tin (see page 106). Trim edges of each dough mold and place molded pastry crusts on a large rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper; refrigerate for 30 minutes. Prick the bottom of each pastry crust with a fork and bake until golden and set, 12–14 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely.

W Recipes for rice pudding, shortbread cookies, almond caramels, and more at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE125

③ Heat remaining sugar, lingonberries, and orange juice in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring frequently, until berries break down and sugar dissolves, 10 minutes; set aside to let cool completely. In a large bowl, whisk the heavy cream until soft peaks form; slowly add vanilla sugar to cream and beat until stiff peaks form. Refrigerate until ready to use.

④ To serve, fill each cooled pastry crust with a heaping tablespoon of the whipped cream and top with a teaspoon of the berry sauce.





FLAVOR'S REALM

IN THE INDIAN STATE OF
GUJARAT, EVERYDAY FOOD IS
HIGH ART BY TODD COLEMAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES OSELAND

A thali lunch at Jayan-tilal Patel's home in Gujarat. Dishes include, clockwise from top, grilled millet flatbread, jaggery, fried chiles, raw onion, mango chutney, okra in yogurt (see page 74 for a recipe), and pappadum.



ON A RECENT TRIP TO GUJARAT, India's westernmost state, I ate the most magnificent thali I've ever had. It was in Ahmadabad, Gujarat's largest metropolitan area, within the walled warren of narrow lanes that is the city's ancient heart. On that hot, dry summer evening I made my way through the winding streets to a beautifully restored *haveli*, or mansion, the roof of which was given over to a restaurant called Agashiye.

Nearly every region of India has its own version of thali, a selection of small dishes served on a circular metal platter (also called a thali), but nowhere does this iconic meal exhibit the richness, the diversity of ingredients, and the sheer abundance that it does in Gujarat. At Agashiye, I sat at a table strewn with rose petals; my meal arrived on a bronze thali ringed with bowls containing foods in a striking variety of colors and textures. There were stewed, spiced black-eyed peas; a crimson-colored sweet-sour tomato curry thick with fried chickpea noodles; a sumptuously sweet dal, or lentil stew, flavored with jaggery (Indian brown sugar) and curry leaves; batter-fried banana and bell pepper slices sprinkled with black salt; and a sweet yogurt pudding tinted a luminous yellow thanks to an immodest quantity of saffron.

There wasn't a morsel of meat in sight, and I didn't miss it. I scooped the food from the different bowls with the fingers of my right hand or with various flatbreads. In between, I nibbled on slivers of sweet raw onion; fried green chiles; and *patra*, a snack of steamed spirals of taro leaf stuffed with spiced chickpea flour. With each bite, one flavor or sensation was offset by another—sweet with sour or salty, hot with cool, crisp with creamy. I sipped cucumber water and watched the chef move to and fro in his enormous open kitchen, deftly putting the finishing touches on thali after thali. He made it look simple. Looking down at the exquisite array of foods before me, I knew it wasn't.

I've been nurturing an obsession with the cooking of Gujarat for years. To me, it's the most beautiful food in the world, and the most mysterious. Certain historical and cultural forces at play in the Gujarati style of eating are easy enough to ascertain. Jutting into the Arabian Sea, this part of India was for centuries a center of trade between the rest of India and points west; it has also historically been a place where the traditions of North India and South India converge. Gujarati traders returning from far-flung lands have brought a certain cosmopolitanism to this part of India that has translated, through the years, as an openness to different foods and flavors.

For all those reasons, a constant flow of new ingredients—such as spices native to Southeast Asia like cinnamon and mace—has moved through Gujarat, and the local merchant class has had the means and the inclination to make use of them. Outside the port cities and other urban centers, much of Gujarat is farmland, so locally grown produce is plentiful there, too. The state is home to Hindus, Muslims, and members of numerous other religions and sects, notably the Jains, who follow a nonviolent way of life of which strict vegetarianism is a vital part. In fact, two out of every three Gujaratis

don't eat meat—the highest proportion of vegetarians of any state in India. Beyond that restriction, though, Gujaratis are, on the whole, happy to indulge their appetites to glorious excess, and cooks there are famously unabashed in their use of ghee (clarified butter) and jaggery.

How do Gujarati cooks manage to obtain such a range and depth of flavor from the vegetables they cook? That, I figured, must come down in no small part to technique. On this trip to Gujarat, I was determined to seek out cooks who could teach me to re-create for myself the opulent, complex dishes I'd come to crave.

THE AFTERNOON AFTER MY feast at Agashiye, I traveled 15 miles southeast of Ahmadabad, to the farm of Jayantilal Patel. I'd been provided an introduction by a Gujarati friend and was happy when Patel invited me to his home for a meal. As I drove, I saw rice paddies fanning out in the distance, their surfaces rippling in the breeze. Water buffalo trudged along, their horns swaying right and left.

Patel's small farm, a loose constellation of sun-baked fields and cinder-block buildings, provides a living for six families through the production of rice, wheat, mustard seeds, and milk. When I arrived, Patel's wife, Meena, and a handful of other women were busy in the courtyard outside the main house. Meena was boiling tea on an earthenware stove fired with tree branches while the others ladled milk from a metal vat into plastic bags in preparation for the next day's deliveries—400 in all—which would be carried out by bicycle. Patel, a weathered 45-year-old man, emerged from the house and welcomed me heartily. "Our Ahmadabad is expanding exponentially," he said with a smile, his arms outstretched. "I'm glad you've decided to visit a place that feeds it!"

As soon as Meena finished pouring tea for me and the workers, she began to prepare our *(continued on page 66)*

TO ME, THE FOOD OF GUJARAT IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL IN THE WORLD, AND THE MOST MYSTERIOUS



Jalpaben Jobanputra and her daughter, Anjali, facing page, neighbors of Varshaben Chauhan in Ahmadabad, Gujarat.





**HERE,
FLAVOR AND
SPICE ARE
THE FOUN-
DATION OF
A DISH, NOT
AN AFTER-
THOUGHT
THAT GETS
SPRINKLED
ON AT THE
END**

Varshaben Chauhan in her kitchen in Ahmadabad, Gujarat. Food preparation in many Gujarati homes is done over plates on the floor. On the propane stove sits a *kadai*, or wok; to the right is a cistern for cooking water, which Chauhan draws from a common tap.

(continued from page 63) supper over the wood-fired stove in the courtyard. She started by frying cumin seeds, chopped garlic, and curry leaves in a wok-like pan called a *kadai*. Almost every Gujarati dish begins like this: with the quick-frying of spices and aromatics, which release their essence into the cooking fat so that the flavors can infuse the ingredients that are added later—in this case, okra, fresh turmeric, chile powder, chickpea flour, and yogurt, for a spicy stew called *bhinda ni kadhi*. In this way, flavor and spice become the foundation of the dish, not an afterthought that gets sprinkled on at the end.

When the dish was nearly ready, Meena began arranging our thalis on the porch of the house while Patel remained in the yard to roast *pappadum* (lentil wafers) over the fire's embers. As we began to eat, dozens of squawking green parrots bolted from the branches of a nearby tree. The thali set before me was far more spare than the one I'd had the previous evening, but the few elements it contained—silky okra stew, black millet flatbread spread with butter, garnishes of sweet mango pickle, fiery fried chiles, and chunks of jaggery (to be nibbled on for an extra dimension of sweetness)—nevertheless added up to something absorbingly complex.

Ingredients to be used for various dishes at Agashiye, a restaurant in Ahmadabad, facing page. The large green colocasia leaves (upper right) are used in a variety of snacks; dried cinnamon leaves (near left, center) flavor a number of curries. (See page 76 for more about Gujarati ingredients.)

THE FOLLOWING DAY, I paid a visit to Sangam Mehta, a 45-year-old housewife who'd spent part of her life in New York City, where I'd met her. Mehta lives in a large, comfortable house in the Palvi area of Ahmadabad. She and her 72-year-old mother, Charu, were almost finished preparing the midday meal when I arrived. I'd accepted an invitation to eat with the Mehtas in part because they are observant Jains, and I was curious to see how the asceticism of that Hindu sect might be reflected in a typical meal. The Mehtas' kitchen contained no tables or chairs; just a few freestanding wooden cupboards and a portable stovetop attached by a rubber hose to a propane tank.

When lunch was ready, Mehta prepared a thali for me. She explained, "The chapati should go closest to you, with

the vegetables on the right and the chutneys and salads opposite them." I looked down at the green plastic platter, on which half a dozen foods were arranged just so. Along with a cucumber stir-fry, a curry made from *pappadum*, and whole-wheat chapati, there was a velvety *sheera*, or sweet porridge—eaten as part of the meal, not afterward as a dessert would be in the West.

According to Jain practice, the meal contained no garlic or onions and no root vegetables like carrots, because harvesting them means killing the entire plant, as opposed to removing just a part of it. Yet the overall effect was hardly austere. I was struck, in particular, by the way that the sweet taste of the *sheera* made the savory elements of the thali stand out. It reminded me of a comment I'd once heard from a native of Punjab, in India's far north: "Gujarati food is nothing more than Punjabi food with a lot of sugar added." How far that was from the truth. The point, I now recognized, wasn't sweetness but balance. Or, as Mehta put it, "Sweet, sour, bitter, salty, spicy—in the Gujarati thali, all the flavors are there." Even the simplest of dishes, she went on to tell me, can be made to sing in that carefully pitched harmony.

Varshaben Chauhan, the wife of a taxi driver who lives in the old city of Ahmadabad, could be called the perfect practitioner of that notion. I'd met the 42-year-old housewife through her husband, who works for the family of a friend of mine, and a few days after my lunch with the Mehtas, I visited her in the 200-year-old building where she and her husband live. It was around 11 in the morning, and I found her squatting on the kitchen floor cutting small red onions with a knife fashioned from a recycled band saw. There was no chopping board; whatever she had to cut—potatoes, tomatoes, chiles—she held in her hand, letting slices fall onto a battered stainless-steel plate. I looked on as she deftly dispensed with two fist-size cabbages, shredding them onto the plate and then massaging the shredded cabbage with salt to soften it. Next she heated peanut oil in a *kadai* and added black mustard seeds, curry leaves, and (continued on page 72)

LAND IN BETWEEN Gujarat's geographical position—on India's west coast, roughly halfway between the subcontinent's northern and southern tiers—places Gujarati cuisine at a crossroads. For eaters accustomed to the creamy, onion-infused curries of the northern Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, and Kashmir—comparatively lavish dishes, with clear roots in Mughal court cooking—the foods of Gujarat seem strikingly different at first glance. For one thing, quick cooking methods like stir-frying and steaming are dominant in Gujarat, yielding dishes with cleanly defined flavors and vibrant colors, as opposed to the slow-braised dishes typical of Mughal cooking. For another, warming spices like cloves and cardamom, so central to the

flavor palate of Northern Indian cooking, are used sparingly by most Gujarati cooks. And yet, Gujarati cooking does bear a notable similarity to Punjabi cuisine: both food cultures rely heavily on flours made from pulses and cereal grains—in the north, for making breads, and in Gujarat for breads, in sweets, and as a thickener in curries.

For those acquainted with the cuisines of India's deep south—a region comprising the states of Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu—Gujarati cooking may seem more familiar. Like Gujarati cuisine, the cooking of South India doesn't include the kinds of thick-sauced, long-cooked dishes native to the north. Additionally, the cuisines of both South India and Gujarat have dishes flavored with similar

spices, black mustard seeds and cumin foremost among them. The way cooks in the two regions use those spices is similar, too—most often quick-frying them whole before adding other ingredients to the pan. But a more than casual observation of Gujarati dishes reveals a profound departure from the cooking of the south. The Gujarati predilection for sweetening savory dishes with jaggery is mostly unknown in the south, as is the free-wheeling use of ghee (clarified butter), which lends Gujarati dishes a richness that, if anything, is more akin to that of the northern states. And, perhaps most significantly, rice on the Gujarati table, if seen at all, is typically a side dish, whereas in the south it is the very foundation of a meal. —T.C.





**AS I DROVE,
I SAW RICE
PADDIES
FANNING
OUT IN THE
DISTANCE,
THEIR
SURFACES
RIPPLING IN
THE BREEZE**

Lalabhai Bharwad, a shepherd on the farm of Jayantilal Patel, outside Ahmadabad, Gujarat. Facing page, curried cauliflower with tomatoes. (See page 74 for a recipe.)

**GUJARATI
DISHES
DELIVER
SWEET,
SALTY, SOUR,
AND SPICY
TASTES IN
EVERY BITE**

Sangam Mehta in her kitchen. Facing page, clockwise from top left: *sheera*, a sweet porridge made with whole-wheat flour and ghee; spiced chickpea-flour snacks; batter-fried peppers and bananas; Gujarati cabbage. (See pages 74 and 76 for recipes.)





(continued from page 66) the pungent spice asafetida.

"You have to listen to the mustard seeds," she explained. "They'll tell you when to add the next ingredient." Sure enough, the seeds began popping furiously, and when the noise subsided, she added the cabbage along with slices of tomato and peppers. The finished dish, flavored with jaggery, lime juice, and chopped cilantro, looked something like an Indian coleslaw. The cabbage was remarkably supple, and the dish delivered the full range of tastes—sweet, sour, bitter, salty, spicy—in every bite.

By this point in the trip, I was aching to get behind the stove and apply what I'd learned. So, I was especially pleased when I arrived later that day for a meal at the home of Manisha Shah, a 60-year-old woman with whom mutual friends had put me in touch, and learned that she was going to make *khandvi*. That snack—a bite-size, rolled-up chickpea-flour pancake strewn with mustard seeds, cilantro, and shreds of fresh coconut—is my favorite of all Gujarati foods, and I'd always wanted to learn how to make it. Shah lives in an apartment complex in the northwestern part of Ahmadabad; she'd invited a number of her friends and relatives—all women, all eager to show me authentic Gujarati home cooking.

To make the *khandvi*, Shah used an immersion blender to purée chickpea flour and yogurt with turmeric powder, salt, and a paste of ginger and green chiles. "In the old days we had a hand churner, but this is much faster," she told me.

Next, she thickened the mixture on the stove until it had acquired a polenta-type consistency. Time was clearly of the essence as she snatched the pot from the stove, turned on her heel, and headed back out to the dining room, her turquoise sari flowing around her. The dining table had been covered with a plastic sheet; Shah immediately spread a swath of the thickened, bright yellow batter on its surface. She pressed the batter gently with her fingers and invited me to do the same; drying quickly, it was already springy to the touch.

Using a small knife, she began cutting the batter into strips the width of suspenders. Smiling, she held the knife out to me. I cut a few strips of my own before Shah gently nudged me aside and completed the job. Then she demonstrated the technique for rolling: begin at the end of a strip, roll until it has the diameter of a quarter, slice, and begin rolling again. She moved aside and let me try. I completed a sizable pile of quite respectable little roll-ups and, surprised at my success, blurted out "Wow!" which drew giggles from the women in the room.

Having participated in the simple but ingenious steps that went into the making of this food, I knew that, when we finally sat down to eat, I'd approach the *khandvi* with a new sense of reverence. The careful preparation, the considered seasoning, the variety of ingredients—every aspect of the dish added up to a balanced and beautiful whole. ✎

W A gallery of photos of Gujarati foods at SAVEUR.COM.GALLERY/GUJARAT

The thali at Agashiye, facing page: in the foreground, at right, spiced black-eyed peas with curry leaves; at left, Gujarati sweet and sour lentils. (See page 76 for recipes.)

THE GUIDE

Ahmadabad

Dinner with drinks and tip: **Inexpensive** Under \$25

The following establishments are all located in Ahmadabad, the largest city in Gujarat. Virtuoso, a global travel service, arranges custom-designed visits to the city and surrounding region; go to www.saveur.com/virtuoso for details. Vimal Shukla (shuklaguide@yahoo.co.in), a local guide, also conducts excellent tours of the region.

WHERE TO STAY

HOUSE OF MANGALDAS GIRDHARDAS Opposite Sidi Sayed Jali (91/79/2550-6946; www.houseofmg.com). Rates: \$105-\$275 double. This ornate hotel in Ahmadabad's old city was built in 1924 as a private mansion. Agashiye, a restaurant on the roof, offers an excellent Gujarati thali in an elegant atmosphere.

WHERE TO EAT

DAS SURTI KHAMAN HOUSE Opposite the

Municipal Corp. (91/79/2214-2163). **Inexpensive.** This famous take-out stand specializes in *farsan*—steamed or fried lentil-based snacks. It also makes excellent *khandvi*, spicy chickpea-flour roll-ups.

GATHIA RATH HL Colony 102, Nehrunagar Crossroad (91/79/2630-5960). **Inexpensive.** A traditional Gujarati morning meal—like the ones this well-loved breakfast eatery serves—typically consists of *chai masala* (spiced tea), fried chiles with salt, a sweet chickpea-flour fritter called *jalebi*, and a savory one called *gathia*—a perfect balance of spicy, sweet, and salty flavors.

GORDHAN THAL Sapath Building (91/79-2687-1222). **Inexpensive.** There are numerous restaurants specializing in thali meals in Ahmadabad; this is one of the finest. Take a seat, and servers will come by bearing the individual

dishes—impeccably prepared dals, vegetable curries, and more.

VISHALLA Opposite Vasna Tol Naka (91/79/2660-2422; www.vishalla.com). **Inexpensive.** This outdoor restaurant is dedicated to the preservation of rural Gujarati foodways. Guests dine in a rustic setting on spiced dry-cooked potatoes, black millet flatbread, chilled buttermilk, and other foods typical of Gujarati village households.

WHAT TO DO

JAMALPUR SHAAK Outside the Jamalpur Darwaja gate, near Sardar Bridge. This immense indoor vegetable market houses hundreds of vendors selling virtually all the vegetables that serve as the foundation of Gujarati cuisine, from bitter melon and bottle gourd to cauliflower and purple yams.

KHAO GALI Near the Teen Darwaja gates. This two-acre stretch of food vendors in the old city is one of Ahmadabad's liveliest night markets. The stalls open after 9:00 p.m. and offer a wide array of street foods, from *pao bhaji* (mashed vegetable curry) to myriad chickpea-flour snacks.





BHINDA NI KADHI

(Okra in Yogurt)

SERVES 6

Creamy yogurt with okra is a delicious pairing. For a source for hard-to-find ingredients, see page 106.

- 3 tbsp. peanut oil
- 2 tsp. cumin seeds
- 2 tbsp. chopped garlic
- 1 tbsp. hot paprika
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 2 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1½ lbs. okra pods, cut crosswise into ¼" slices
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 3 tbsp. Indian chickpea flour
- ¾ cup Greek yogurt

Heat oil in a 12" skillet over high heat. Add cumin; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add garlic, paprika, sugar, and turmeric; cook until garlic is soft, about 2 minutes. Add okra and season with salt; cook until okra is coated in the spice mixture, about 45 seconds. Stir in 3 cups water and bring to a simmer; cook until okra is crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Stir in chickpea flour and cook until thickened, 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat; let cool for 5 minutes. Stir in yogurt.



FULAVER NU SHAAK

(Curried Cauliflower with Tomatoes)

SERVES 4

Frying whole spices to release their flavor—a technique known in many parts of India as *baghar*—is crucial to making this dish, as well as most of the Gujarati specialties on these pages. For a source for hard-to-find ingredients, see page 106.

- 2 tsp. hot paprika
- 2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- 2 tbsp. peanut oil
- 2 tsp. black mustard seeds
- 1/8 tsp. asafetida
- 2 serrano chiles, chopped
- 1 medium head cauliflower, cored and roughly chopped
- 3 plum tomatoes, cored and roughly chopped
- Kosher salt, to taste

In a bowl, combine paprika, coriander, and turmeric; set aside. Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over high heat. Add mustard seeds and asafetida; cook until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Add reserved spice mixture, chiles, cauliflower, and ¼ cup water and cook until tender, 5–6 minutes. Lower heat

to medium, add tomatoes, and season with salt; cook, covered, until softened, about 2 minutes.



KHANDVI

(Spiced Chickpea-Flour Snacks)

SERVES 4–6

The batter for this snack has to be of the right consistency—not too wet, not too dry—when you spread it out for rolling, so test a spoonful of it on a plate first. For step-by-step instructions for rolling the *khandvi*, see below left. For a source for hard-to-find ingredients, see page 106.

FOR THE KHANDVI:

- 4 serrano chiles, stemmed
- 1 1" piece peeled ginger, minced
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 cup Indian chickpea flour
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. ground turmeric

FOR THE GARNISH:

- ¼ cup peanut oil
- 2 tsp. black mustard seeds
- 2 tsp. sesame seeds
- ¾ tsp. asafetida
- 10 fresh curry leaves
- 6 serrano chiles, julienned
- 5 chiles de árbol
- 2 tbsp. roughly chopped cilantro
- 2 tbsp. fresh grated coconut

1 Make the *khandvi*: Purée serranos, ginger, and ¼ cup water in a food processor until smooth; set paste aside. In a bowl, whisk together yogurt, flour, salt, turmeric, and 1 cup water. Whisk reserved paste into batter; transfer batter to a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Whisking constantly, bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low; cook until very thick, about 15 minutes. Follow instructions

below left for forming the *khandvi*.

2 Make the garnish: Heat oil in a 10" skillet over high heat. Add mustard seeds, sesame, asafetida, curry leaves, serranos, and chiles de árbol and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 2 minutes. To serve, pour garnish over roll-ups; sprinkle with cilantro and coconut.



KOBI NU SHAAK

(Gujarati Cabbage)

SERVES 6–8

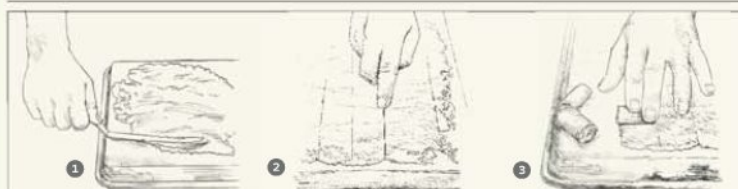
It's crucial to salt the cabbage before cooking in order to extract some of its moisture. For a source for hard-to-find ingredients, see page 106.

- 1 green cabbage, cored and shredded
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 2 tbsp. peanut oil
- 2 tsp. black mustard seeds
- 2 tsp. asafetida
- 2 tsp. cumin seeds
- 10 fresh curry leaves
- 2 tsp. ground turmeric
- 3 plum tomatoes, chopped
- 3 Italian frying peppers, seeded and thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 serrano chile, thinly sliced
- 5 tbsp. roughly chopped cilantro
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 tbsp. sugar

1 Toss cabbage and salt in a bowl. Let wilt for 1 hour. Squeeze excess liquid from cabbage; set aside.

2 Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add mustard seeds, asafetida, cumin, and curry leaves; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add reserved cabbage, turmeric, tomatoes, peppers, and serrano; cook, stirring, until cabbage is crisp-tender, 6–7 minutes. Stir

FORMING KHANDVI



Here's how to form the *khandvi* shown above. 1 Arrange 2 upside-down baking sheets so that the shorter sides are facing you. Spoon half the batter onto the close side of one of the sheets. Using a spatula, spread batter toward far edge of sheet, creating an even layer. Repeat with remaining batter on second baking sheet. 2 Let batter cool for 5 minutes. Using a paring knife, trim uneven edges of dried batter. Cut each sheet of batter into eight 5" x 2" strips. 3 Roll up each strip of dried batter into a neat cylinder shape that's about the size of a quarter in diameter. Transfer roll-ups to a platter.

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in cilantro, lime juice, and sugar. Season with salt; cook until flavors meld, 3–5 minutes.



BHAJIYA

(Batter-Fried Peppers and Bananas)

SERVES 6

Chickpea flour, the base of the frying batter for this appealing, spicy-sweet snack, is one of the most important foodstuffs in Gujarati cooking. If you can't find that ingredient, substitute all-purpose flour. For a source for hard-to-find ingredients, see page 106.

- 2 cups Indian chickpea flour
- 4 tsp. hot paprika
- 2 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ⅛ tsp. cayenne
- 2 firm-ripe bananas, peeled and sliced into ½"-thick rounds
- 2 green bell peppers, stemmed, seeded, and cut crosswise into ¼" rings
- Peanut oil, for frying
- Black salt, to taste (optional)

In a large bowl, whisk together 1 cup flour, paprika, turmeric, baking powder, salt, cayenne, and ¾ cup water to make a smooth batter. Put remaining chickpea flour into a medium bowl. Working in batches, dredge bananas and peppers in chickpea flour; shake off excess. Transfer bananas and peppers to a rack set over a baking sheet. Pour enough oil into a 6-qt. Dutch oven that it reaches 2". Heat over high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 400°. Working in batches, dip bananas and peppers in batter, shake off excess, and fry, turning occasionally, until crisp, about 1 minute. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to paper towels. Sprinkle with black salt, if you like.



DAL

(Gujarati Sweet and Sour Lentils)

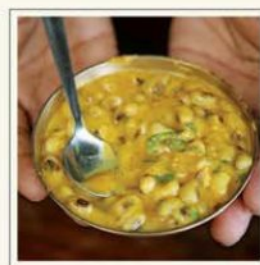
SERVES 4

This delicious stewed dish strikes an elegant balance between sweet and tart flavors. For a source for hard-to-find ingredients, see page 106.

- 1 cup toor dal
- ¼ cup ghee or peanut oil
- ¼ cup roasted unsalted peanuts
- ¾ tsp. cumin seeds
- ½ tsp. black mustard seeds
- ¼ tsp. asafetida
- ¼ tsp. fenugreek seeds
- 16 fresh curry leaves
- 2 chiles de árbol, broken in half
- 2 plum tomatoes, cored and roughly chopped
- 4 tbsp. finely chopped jaggery or packed brown sugar
- 2 tbsp. tamarind concentrate
- 2 tsp. hot paprika
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 tsp. ground cumin

- 3 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 2 tbsp. roughly chopped cilantro

Bring dal and 9 ½ cups water to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, stirring, until tender, about 1 hour 45 minutes. Using a wooden spoon, vigorously stir dal to mash it up; set aside. Meanwhile, melt ghee in a 12" skillet over high heat. Add peanuts, cumin, mustard seeds, asafetida, fenugreek, curry leaves, chiles, and tomatoes; cook until fragrant, 3–4 minutes. Pour spice mixture into dal with jaggery, tamarind, paprika, turmeric, coriander, cumin, and lemon juice. Season with salt. Simmer until flavors meld, about 10 minutes. (Stir in a little water, if necessary; it should be soupy.) Garnish with cilantro.



SAFED CHOLE

(Spiced Black-Eyed Peas with Curry Leaves)

SERVES 4–6

In this earthy legume stew, chickpea

flour is used to thicken and add a nutty undertone. For a source for hard-to-find ingredients, see page 106.

- 2 tbsp. peanut oil
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds
- 10 fresh curry leaves
- ¼ cup Indian chickpea flour
- 2 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1–2 tsp. hot paprika
- ⅛ tsp. asafetida
- 1½ tbsp. tamarind concentrate
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped jaggery or packed brown sugar
- 2 15-oz. cans black-eyed peas, drained
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro

W A recipe for a Gujarati dessert at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE125

Heat oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add cumin and curry leaves; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Stir in flour, turmeric, paprika, and asafetida and cook, stirring, until fragrant, 1–2 minutes. Stir in 2 ¾ cups water; bring to a boil. Stir in tamarind and jaggery; stir to dissolve. Add black-eyed peas, season with salt; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until thickened, 3–5 minutes. Stir in cilantro.

THE GUJARATI PANTRY



Here are six widely used Gujarati ingredients called for in the recipes on these pages; they can be found at most South Asian supermarkets (see page 106 for online sources). **1** Toor dal, also called *tuvar dal*, are hulled and split yellow pigeon peas, legumes that resemble split yellow peas (which make a good substitute). They are used in everything from legume stews (also called dals) to crisp snacks. **2** Tamarind concentrate, usually stocked next to pickles and chutneys, is the extracted pulp of the tamarind fruit. Many cooks prefer to make fresh extract from the pods, but we like the convenience of the jarred version; it has a clean tartness that works perfectly in a great number of Gujarati dishes. **3** Asafetida is the dried resin or sap

of the ferula, a variety of fennel. Sold either as a pressed block or, more commonly, as a powder in the spice section, it has a pleasing, sulfurous aroma and lends an onion-like taste to countless curries and dals. **4** Black mustard seeds have a pleasantly bitter quality without the pungency of their yellow cousins; they appear in virtually every savory Gujarati dish. **5** Dried turmeric is used to add color and a musky taste to all sorts of Gujarati stir-fries, dals, and curries; it's typically sold in small plastic bags or glass bottles. **6** Indian chickpea flour, sometimes labeled *besan* or gram flour, is made from the small dried Indian chickpea known as *chana dal* and is the base for dozens of delicious Gujarati snacks. —T.C.

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THE WONDERS OF HAM

AROUND THE WORLD, CURED PORK IS A CELEBRATED FEAST FOOD

BY DANA BOWEN PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD COLEMAN AND ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI





THERE'S A MOMENT I CHERISH above all others during the holiday season, and it arrives without fail about four hours after Christmas dinner. That's when someone in my family ventures over to the refrigerator, pulls out the leftover, tinfoil-covered platter of ham, puts it on the kitchen island, and fixes a snack. Before long, others have abandoned their books or board games or television shows, and a small crowd hovers around that ham, laughing and talking and noshing. Someone fetches

the remaining dinner rolls. Someone else breaks out the pickles and mustard. It's Christmas dinner, part two.

No other food can bring my family together like that. And no food is quite as compliant: my family's Christmas ham, which we simply drop into a roasting pan and coat with a brown sugar and mustard glaze, keeps giving right on through to New Year's, in sandwiches, pastas, fried rice, mac-and-cheese, beans, greens, soup, and whatever else we feel inspired to make with it.

Simple a pleasure though ham is, it's also complicated in its way. The ones that I grew up eating in New York on holidays—sweet and juicy and pink, with a crackly, caramelized crust—are worlds apart from the country-style hams that my husband, Lindsay, was raised with in North Carolina. His family's hams are complex, salty, and wonderful in a completely different way. Ten years ago, when I was first handed one of the hams Lindsay's uncle Kent cures in salt in the fall and leaves hanging in his barn until the following year, I have to admit, I was scared by the sight of it. It was hard to the touch, and part of it was speckled with mold. I followed Kent's instructions to scrub it clean; then I removed the two bottom crisper drawers of my refrigerator and stored the thing there until I mustered the courage to cook it. Cleaned up, it looked more like the serrano hams I've



A worker in northern Italy, spreading lard on prosciutto di Parma. Facing page, ham steaks baked with hazelnut sauce. (See page 96 for a recipe.)

seen perched on tapas bars across Spain or the prosciutti that hang in *salumerie* all over Italy, both of which are shaved thin and eaten uncooked. Suddenly I wondered, Why couldn't I eat Uncle Kent's ham the same way?

Cookbooks were of little help. James Beard, who was probably the most devoted ham champion this country has ever seen, acknowledges in his book *American Cookery* (Little, Brown, 1972) that the coveted salt-cured hams of Europe—Belgium's Ardennes

ham, France's Bayonne ham, Germany's Westphalian ham, Parma's prosciutto—are traditionally served uncooked. But when it comes to American dry-aged country ham, like the ones Lindsay's relatives have made for centuries in the South, Beard told us to cook it. That's the way it's always been done.

Uncle Kent agreed. "I guess you could eat it raw," he told me over the phone. "But I never do." Instead, he told me to saw off the hock and save it for seasoning soups

and beans, slice off a few pieces for pan-fried ham steaks, and then soak the ham for a few days before simmering, glazing, and baking it. And so I did. (I had to borrow a handsaw from my apartment building's superintendent, Charlie.) The results were delicious, but I couldn't resist shaving off a few pieces first to eat raw; they had a gentle salinity, and they practically melted on the tongue.

Dry-curing the hind legs of pigs is one of the oldest ways of preserving pork, and—with all due respect to Uncle Kent and James Beard—it does indeed render the meat ready to eat. The ancient Romans did it. The Gauls did it. And some historians believe that those Europeans learned how to do it by trading with the Chinese, who have been curing hams for millennia. Salt-cured hams are a traditional holiday food in scores of countries, from France and Germany to England and the United States, and a love of ham in those countries has traveled to the Caribbean, the Philippines, South America, and beyond. The meat and bone from hams are put to use in myriad ways—in Chinese ham broth soups and in German baked ham steaks, to name but two. Ham pairs beautifully with sweet, spicy, or creamy foods; those foods counteract the meat's saltiness, which can range from mild to emphatic (see "Ham Companions," page 90).

The process of curing ham—whether covering it with salt and letting it age or wet-curing it with a brine solution—is pretty straightforward (see "A Simple Science," page 88), but a lot of other factors lend regional and stylistic differences: the breed of hog and what it eats; the kind of salt or pepper and how it's applied; whether sugar is mixed into the cure; whether the meat is smoked in addition to being cured; and so on. "Ham is one of our most fascinating and varied (*continued on page 87*)



KNOW YOUR HAM

Fresh ham ①, the uncured haunch of a hog, can be cured by several different methods. Traditional hams are dry-cured with salt and aged for months, even years, the result being a preserved meat that's deep red and intensely flavored. One of the world's best-known dry-cured hams is **prosciutto di Parma** ②, from Italy's Emilia-Romagna region; its creamy flavor is due in part to the fact that the pigs are fed whey left over from the making of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese. **Speck** ③, from the northern Italian province of Südtirol, is made from deboned, flattened hams that are rubbed with salt, juniper, and herbs before being cold-smoked with beech wood. Emilia-Romagna's lean, musky **culatello** ④ is made from the interior muscle of the hind leg; the cut is wrapped in twine and aged for 12 or more months. Spain's famous dry-cured **serano ham** ⑤ is typically aged for two years; the version known as *jamón ibérico de bellota* is made from black hogs that forage for acorns. **Country ham** ⑥ is a catch-all term in the U.S. for dry-cured hams that are aged for at least six months; their cures may include pepper and sugar, and the hams may or may not be smoked. Wet-cured hams, like the precut **spiral ham** ⑦, are injected with a brine solution instead of being dry-cured. Other wet-cured varieties like France's **jambon de Paris** ⑧ and American **deli hams** ⑨ are pressed into a mold; the same goes for most **canned hams** ⑩. Over the years, wet-cured varieties that mimic older, dry-cured styles have been developed. The deli meat known as **Black Forest ham** ⑪ is a wet-cured ham cooked and seasoned so that it resembles Germany's *Schwarzwälder Schinken*, whose thick rind is the result of smoking over fir needles. Some hams come not from the pig's leg but from the muscular shoulder. **Tasso ham** ⑫, a smoked, dry-cured Cajun ham from the shoulder, is spiced with cayenne and often used as a seasoning, much like dry-cured **smoked ham hock** ⑬. Some ham producers have taken to marketing wet- and dry-cured **picnic hams** ⑭, also from the shoulder. A different use of shoulder meat is in **Spam** ⑮, the spiced, canned ham introduced in the United States in 1937; a whopping 100 million cans of it are sold in the U.S. every year. (See THE PANTRY, page 106, for information on purchasing hams.) —D.B.





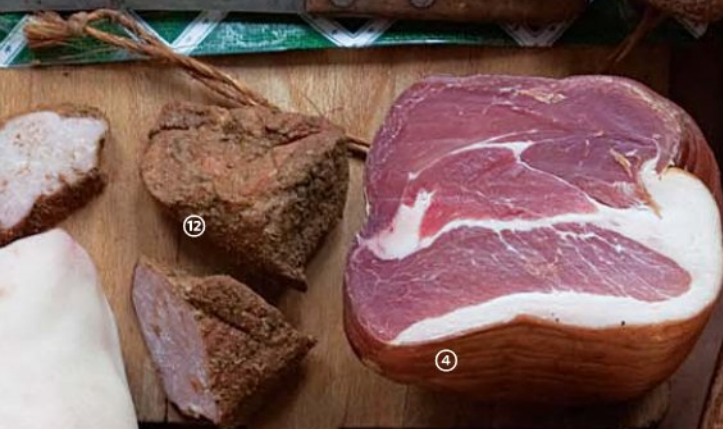
③



⑨



⑩



⑫

④



⑦



⑤



⑥





(continued from page 82) native foods, Beard writes in *Beard on Food* (Knopf, 1974). "One never tires of eating it."

He wasn't exaggerating. In the decade since I tackled Uncle Kent's ham, I've cooked long-cured hams bought from Southern truck stops, eaten quick-cured smoked hams from Russian butchers, and met with other ham lovers to savor contraband *jamón ibérico* from Spain (now imported legally, thank heavens). I've sent countless honey-baked spiral hams to friends who are mourning, birthing, or undergoing an IRS audit. I've compared the flavors and textures of uncooked country hams from Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, and I've walked through aging rooms where the wood beams are slicked with centuries' worth of ham fat.

Until recently, though, I had never been to Smithfield, Virginia, or Parma, Italy—arguably two of the most important capitals of cured pork in the world—to eat ham. So, this past fall, I made pilgrimages to those places, each within a week of the other, to understand the glories and nuances of the world's greatest hams.

ALMOST EVERYONE I met in Smithfield, a town of 7,000 people on the James River with a picture-perfect main street, had something to do with ham. On a Friday night, the bar at Smithfield Station, one of two restaurants downtown, was crowded with employees from Smithfield Foods, the largest pork processor in the world, drinking beer and eating ham biscuits. At a nearby table, Henrietta Gwaltney,

the great-granddaughter of the legendary Smithfield ham producer P. D. Gwaltney (see "Man's Best Friend," below), was dining with her two grown children.

Smithfield is where American ham began and where its evolution has played out for the past four centuries. Jamestown, site of the earliest English colony in North America, is just a few miles upriver; the settlers who brought pigs to the New World started confining hogs on a nearby island, called

Queen Victoria placed a standing order for six a week.

Smithfield had all the right conditions for ham making. It had the hogs: a flavorful, fatty razorback variety. It had cheap feed: peanuts, which grew in abundance and gave the hogs a uniquely nutty flavor. It had access to the sea (for salt) and to the James River, which allowed for easy transport. And it had the perfect climate: hot during the day and cool at night, with the four seasons necessary for hams to

colonial Williamsburg settlement nearby were going home with Smithfield hams. Immigrants looking for hams like the ones from their homelands started buying them, too; Chinese-Americans, for instance, found them to be a fine-tasting substitute for their smoky Yunnan and Jinhua hams. Smithfield hams and, by extension, Virginia hams became foods with a coveted pedigree.

In the 1930s and '40s, ham production, and ham itself, started to change. With the advent of refrigeration, temperature-controlled aging rooms could replicate the changing of the seasons, so country hams could be produced year-round. More important, refrigeration allowed for the production of lightly cured "city" hams, which were injected with brine to speed up the curing process and shipped in refrigerated railcars. Many Americans fell in love with the sweet flavor of city hams, and producers churned them out in great numbers. Smithfield, by then the pork capital of the country, boomed. Over time, a single company—now called Smithfield Foods—became the principal producer in town. Even though the company now processes some 20 million hams a year, only 45,000 are the dry-cured, hickory-smoked Genuine Smithfield hams, which hang for at least six months in a facility I toured with Larry Santure, the company's senior business manager for dry-cured meats. "It's all still done by hand," he said, as we passed the three-story-high, smoke-charred closets where hams were dangling. "The only thing that's (continued on page 92)



Jinhua hams in Zhejiang, China. Facing page, buying a whole serrano ham at a general store in South Africa, circa 1948.

Hog Island, to raise them for ham, and in 1779 a sea captain named Mallory Todd started to ship hams from Smithfield to the British West Indies. The Virginia trade eventually spread to England, where

undergo a proper curing.

Smithfield also had some savvy marketers, who starting promoting local hams in the early 1900s. In the 1930s, many of the tourists flocking to visit the newly restored



Man's Best Friend

In the 1920s, a ham producer in Smithfield, Virginia, named Pembroke Decatur "P.D." Gwaltney Jr. found a ham in his aging room that, according to his records, had first been cured in 1902. Impressed that it was still perfectly edible, he started taking it with him to county fairs, business conventions, and other events to prove the safety and longevity of Smithfield hams. Gwaltney eventually attached a collar and a leash to the piece of meat and

started calling it his pet ham. He even insured it, for \$5,000. The pet ham soon made it into newspaper articles around the country; in 1932 the syndicated column "Believe It or Not!" ran a cartoon of the ham and its owner alongside a brief caption: "Although never introduced to cold storage [it] remains tender and sweet and fit to eat after 30 years." The petrified-looking ham's current resting place? The Isle of Wight County Museum in Virginia. —D.B.



A SIMPLE SCIENCE

There are two ways to cure the hind leg of a pig: the dry way and the wet way. Dry-curing, the original method for making ham, is a straightforward process of salting and aging that has been around for thousands of years. First, the ham is rubbed with ample amounts of salt (as pictured on these pages at a ham producer in Langhirano, Italy), that most ancient and reliable of preservatives. The salt draws moisture out of the meat's tissues through osmosis—the movement of water from areas of low salt concentration (in this case, the interior of the ham) to areas of high salt concentration (the ham's salty surface)—which inhibits the growth of harmful bacteria and molds. Most American country hams are covered in a layer of salt, then left to cure for about 50 days. Italian prosciutto is salted in two phases for a total of about 24 days.

After the ham is washed, it is stored at temperatures between 40 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit for several weeks, during which time the residual salt that is concentrated in the outer part of the meat begins to penetrate into the flesh through a process called equalization. The ham is then hung to age for anywhere from three months to two years, during which time it loses more moisture. (A dry-cured ham will ultimately shed between 18 and 36 percent of its original weight.) Its flavor intensifies, and the salinity breaks down the meat's protein filaments, lending raw dry-cured flesh its translucence and dense yet tender texture. Meanwhile, enzymes break down flavorless proteins into savory amino acids, such as glutamate, which impart a luscious, umami flavor. In many parts of the world—Germany, eastern Europe, and much of the U.S.—another step is added: smoking,

which gives the ham more flavor, kills microbes, and repels insects. Many producers also add small amounts of nitrates and nitrites as preservatives.

Historically, virtually all ham was dry-cured, and it was a seasonal food, produced only where the weather cooperated: if the climate was too cold, the hams would freeze and not cure properly; if it was too humid, the hams would spoil. In Italy, China, the American South, and other ham-friendly parts of the world, hogs were traditionally slaughtered after fall's first cold snap, and the first hams were ready to eat in the spring (which is why ham became a traditional food for Easter supper). Those that aged longer, left to undergo what's known as "the summer sweats," were prized for their more concentrated flavor and texture.

The advent of refrigeration changed all that. Not only did it allow people to dry-cure hams in temperature-controlled rooms at any time of year, but it also led to the proliferation of wet-curing techniques that preserved the meat to a lesser degree but enough that the hams kept well if refrigerated. During wet-curing, otherwise known as brining, the ham is immersed in or injected with a solution of water, salt, and sometimes sugar and spices. Wet-curing is easy and fast—the hams are often finished in a day or two. In the U.S., such hams came to be called city hams (to distinguish them from their "country" cousins) and quickly became popular. In France, *jambon de Paris* is a well-loved wet-cured ham; other cultures developed their own versions. Wet-cured hams, though often plumper and juicier than dry-cured ones thanks to the brining solution, tend to be milder tasting because the process dilutes the meat's flavor. —Emma Boast and Dana Bowen





①



②



③



④

HAM COMPANIONS

Numerous ingredients are naturally good pairings for ham's bold, salty flavors. Eggs, with their mild character and silky texture, are served with ham in many parts of the world, whether in a Western omelette ①, a cheese soufflé (see page 95 for a recipe), or a plate of pan-fried ham steaks with sunny-side-up eggs and a shot of red-eye gravy, made by deglazing the pan with a bit of brewed coffee. Bread is an age-old companion to ham—a stack of buttermilk biscuits, say, a couple of slices of seeded rye, or a handful of crisp *grissini* (bread sticks) ②—because the starch softens the meat's rich taste. Whether quickly brine-cured or long-aged, ham benefits from something sweet to counteract its saltiness; honey ③ is often

used in a glaze, or even in the brining mixture itself, as are Karo syrup, maple syrup, molasses, and sorghum. Everywhere from eastern Europe to the Caribbean, hams may be dry-cured and covered with a caramelized sugar crust. Fruit, too, can provide the requisite sweetness; melon pieces or dried figs taste wonderful wrapped in silky prosciutto, and cooked ham is commonly matched with apples—as in the classic Pennsylvania Dutch dish *schnitz und knepp*, or ham and dumplings with dried apples—as well as with pineapple ④, a pairing that gained wide popularity in midcentury America (see page 96 for a recipe for pineapple-chipotle-glazed ham, pictured above). Additionally, pineapples contain bromelain, an enzyme that works as a natural tenderizer for the ham.



All over the world, from England to Brazil, cooks use whole cloves ④ to lend tingingly, spicy notes to ham's full flavors. Another common complement is nuts ⑤; the Southern ham canon includes various stuffed hams filled with bread crumbs, dried fruit, and pecans—and also cubed ham and peanut salads. Cooks in the United States have discovered that simmering ham in Dr. Pepper and Coca-Cola helps tenderize the meat; the soft drinks can also be reduced to make a sweet, flavorful glaze ⑥. Mild-tasting seafoods, such as scallops ⑦ and shrimp, are enlivened by salty cured hams like speck and smoked country ham. Mustard's spiciness stands up to ham's flavor; mustard powder may be worked into a glaze, and jarred mustard of all kinds may sim-

ply be served as a condiment. *Mostarda* ⑧, the Italian fruit jam spiced with mustard seed, is often served with *bollito misto*, a boiled dish that contains many cuts of meat, including ham. Other spicy, tangy jams—like hot pepper jelly and chutney—are terrific when spread on a ham sandwich or a ham biscuit. When it comes to herbs, ham's traditional partner is parsley, whose herbaceous notes offer a pleasing counterpoint to the rich meat, as in France's famed *terrine de jambon persillé*, a ham and parsley terrine in aspic (see page 96 for a recipe) ⑨. One of the most winning pairings for the meat is cheese, whether it's shards of Parmesan with prosciutto or Gruyère melted in a luscious *croque monsieur*, the quintessential ham and cheese sandwich ⑩. —D.B.

(continued from page 87) changed is that years ago there was a mule team that pulled pallets of ham to the second floor."

Even though city hams are far more common, the long-cured country kind is what everyone in Smithfield seems to prefer. "You wouldn't think to entertain without it," Janice Scott, a 74-year-old home cook and caterer, told me over ham biscuits at the Smithfield Inn, a bed-and-breakfast and restaurant. When she doesn't simmer and bake one of Smithfield's hams, she says, she goes for a milder, dry-aged Edwards ham, cured 20 miles away, in Surry.

I've long been a fan of Edwards hams; they're smoky and a bit sweet, with a salinity that tickles but doesn't torch the tongue. When I visited the Edwards smokehouse and country store, the third-generation producer, a genial 53-year-old named Sam Edwards, served me his new release: a 16-to-24-month-aged ham, made from fatty Berkshire pigs; he suggests eating it raw. Called Surryano (a pun on *serrano* and *Surry*), it's silky and intense, the perfect thing to wrap around a piece of melon—but that's not how most people eat his long-aged hams.

Edwards took me across the James River on the nearby Surry-Jamestown ferry (which his great-grandfather used to own and operate), then over to the Old Chickahominy House, a restaurant in Williamsburg. Its owner, Maxine Williams, who's worked there for 40 years, sells about 600 biscuits a day made with slices of cooked Edwards ham. Each of her rectangular buttermilk biscuits is a thing of beauty, enveloping slices of luscious ham and browned under the broiler before hitting the table. Williams let me into the kitchen just as one of her cooks, Tony Canaday, was beginning to maneuver his knife around the bones of a 14-pound Edwards ham, which had been simmering for four

hours. I asked whether she'd ever bought boneless ham. She shook her head. "Cooking it on the bone keeps it juicy." Then I asked what she did with the scraps. "Ground ham!" she said, as if I should have known. "I sell a lot during the holidays for hors d'oeuvres."

LIKE FOLKS FROM Smithfield, the people of Parma, a bustling city of 180,000 in Italy's northern region of Emilia-Romagna, know ham: when I visited last fall, I was struck

country hams are, and they aren't smoked, so their flavor is softer, sweeter, and decidedly less salty. Still, I visited a few of those producers and was struck by just how similarly ham-making techniques had developed over the centuries here, halfway around the world from Smithfield. Sure, there are techniques that are distinctive to Parma: there's the *segnatura*, or covering of the exposed flesh in lard, and the fact that producers open windows in the aging rooms

be cooked, just like ham in the American South, as I learned at a museum in Langhirano dedicated to prosciutto. There, I stumbled across a display of recipes from the Middle Ages that called for cooking ham in water or wine; the museum guide pointed out that cooking was merely a precautionary measure against the contamination that sometimes occurred when hams weren't cured properly. In the 1870s, when producers switched from local pigs to a faster-growing English breed, ham makers found that the meat cured more consistently and could safely be eaten raw. After that, uncooked prosciutto di Parma quickly became a luxury food.

As I traveled around Parma and its environs, stopping in at *salumerie* where butchers sold their own, house-made prosciutti, I couldn't help thinking about the smaller producers I'd encountered around the American South, the ones who cure just a few hams a year and hold fast to the old ways. I met a lot of people like that in Italy, but none made more of an impression on me than Massimo Spigaroli, a chef who is known for his *culatello* ham, a smaller, boneless cousin of prosciutto made north of Parma with the prized central portion of the haunch. His restaurant, Al Cavallino Bianco, is situated on a working farm along the river Po where his great-grandfather used to raise hogs and cure hams, just as Spigaroli does today. Down in the cellar where his hams hang, he pointed to a high window where a cool, humid wind was rushing in from the river. "Culatello needs this humidity," he explained.

Later, sitting in the restaurant's rustic dining room, I was overwhelmed by the richness and deep flavor of Spigaroli's *culatello*. Like the best hams—whether from Virginia, an Italian hill town, or Uncle Kent's backyard—they distill the essence of the place where they're made. 🐷



A producer near Parma, Italy, with *culatello*, made from the interior muscle of the hind leg. Facing page, country ham biscuits. (See page 98 for a recipe).

by how everyone I met knew what producer they like the best, what length of curing suits their tastes, and how to make an outstanding ham sandwich—the local *torta fritta* is a pillow of lightly fried dough stuffed with shaved prosciutto, whose creamy fat melts into the warm bread. Just south of Parma, particularly in the town of Langhirano, ham is big business. Some 200 producers cure about 9 million hams a year. Most of the hams they make aren't cured in salt for as long as American

to let the dry breezes wash over their hams. And there are numerous differences in temperature, humidity, and type of salt used. But the equipment and the aging rooms in Smithfield and Parma seemed remarkably alike.

Italians also produce *prosciutto cotto*—a cooked quick-cured ham—that tastes a lot like our boiled or baked city hams; it is stuffed into *arancini* (rice balls), tossed with pasta dishes, and draped over pizza. In fact, almost all dry-aged ham in Italy used to





Savannah country ham. (See facing page for a recipe.)

SAVANNAH COUNTRY HAM

SERVES 20-25

This magnificent roast (shown on facing page) is simmered in beer before it's baked—a practice favored by cooks in Savannah, Georgia. As with any country ham, this preparation calls for soaking the ham (in this case, in both water and brewed black tea) before cooking it to remove excess salt.

- 1 12-15-lb. uncooked country ham, preferably Smithfield or Edwards (see page 106)
- 20 cups brewed chilled black tea
- 6 12-oz. bottles of beer, preferably lager or bock
- 1/2 cup blackstrap molasses (see page 106)
- 1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard

1 Rinse ham and use a firm kitchen brush to scrub any mold off the meat's surface. Transfer ham to a 5-gallon stockpot and cover with cold water. Refrigerate ham for 24 hours, changing the water 3 times.

2 Drain ham and return to stockpot; add tea and enough water to cover. Soak for another 24 hours.

W *The chance to win a cooked Edwards ham at SAVEUR.COM /WIN. See page 106 for details.*

3 Drain ham; return to stockpot. Add beer and enough water to cover; bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium and simmer until a small knife inserted in the thickest part of the ham slides easily in and out, about 3 1/2 hours.

4 Heat oven to 400°. Drain ham, reserving 1/4 cup cooking liquid. Trim skin and fat; transfer ham to a rack set inside a roasting pan. Whisk together reserved cooking liquid, molasses, brown sugar, and mustard to make a glaze; brush ham with some glaze. Bake ham, occasionally brushing with glaze, until glossy, 15-20 minutes. Let rest for 20 minutes before carving.



APRICOT-GINGER GLAZED HAM

SERVES 15-20

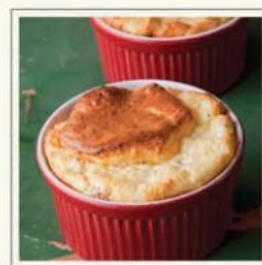
This recipe comes from Chris Williams, the chef of Lone Star Barbecue & Mercantile in Santee, South Carolina.

- 1 7-12-lb. half semiboneless ham (see page 106)
- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 tbsp. minced fresh ginger
- 1/2 cup apricot preserves or jam
- 1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

1 Heat oven to 350°. Wrap ham in foil; transfer to a roasting pan. Bake until a thermometer inserted into the deepest part of ham reads 145°, about 15-20 minutes per pound.

2 Meanwhile, heat oil in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add ginger; cook until soft, 2-3 minutes. Add preserves, sugar, and vinegar; cook, stirring, until mixture becomes a syrupy glaze, about 10 minutes.

3 Unwrap ham and brush with some glaze; raise oven to 500°. Bake, brushing occasionally with remaining glaze, until browned, about 20 minutes more. Let rest for 20 minutes before carving.



HAM AND CHEESE SOUFFLÉS

SERVES 6

Ham and eggs are natural partners. In

these pillowy soufflés, both ingredients are enhanced with dried mustard and sharp cheddar. The soufflés will begin to deflate minutes after you take them out of the oven, so bring them to the table as soon as they're done.

- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 4 oz. grated sharp white cheddar
- 1/2 tsp. mustard powder
- 1/8 tsp. cayenne
- 1/8 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 6 eggs, separated
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 4 oz. finely chopped ham (any variety will do)
- 1 1/2 tbsp. finely chopped chives
- 1/4 cup finely grated Parmesan

1 In a 2-qt. saucepan, melt 2 tbsp. of the butter over medium-high heat. Add the shallots; cook until soft, 1-2 minutes. Whisk in the flour to make a smooth paste; slowly add the milk while whisking. Bring the sauce to a simmer, stirring, until thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in the cheddar, mustard, cayenne, nutmeg, egg yolks, and salt and pepper. Stir over medium heat until just steaming, 3-4 minutes. Transfer the cheese mixture to a large bowl; stir in ham and chives; chill for 30 minutes.

2 Heat oven to 375°. Grease six 8-oz. ramekins with the remaining butter. Coat the bottom and sides of ramekins with Parmesan; shake out any excess. In a large bowl, whip the egg whites to stiff peaks. Working in 3 batches, fold egg whites into the chilled cheese mixture to make a fluffy batter. Gently divide the batter between prepared ramekins and transfer to a rimmed baking sheet. With a damp cloth, wipe away any of the soufflé batter that's splashed onto the ramekin rims. Bake until golden brown and puffed, about 30 minutes. Serve immediately.

BUYING A HAM

Almost all supermarket hams—the ones most Americans associate with holiday roasts—are what's known as "city hams," whole or half hind legs of pork that have been wet-cured by being injected with a brine solution of water, salt, sugar, and other seasonings before they're smoked and cooked. City hams can make beautiful roasts that stand up well to glazes and spice rubs (see the recipe for apricot-ginger glazed ham, at left, and pineapple-chipotle glazed ham, on page 96). Here are a few guidelines for buying:

Check the Label

Products labeled simply "ham" are of the highest grade and the costliest; they have true pork flavor and fine-grained meat. Those with the label "ham in natural juices" can be a good value; they contain extra water and stay juicy when baked. Hams labeled "ham, water added" contain an even greater amount of water and are less flavorful. Avoid products labeled "ham and water product"; they contain as much water as can be pumped into the ham and have a diluted, bland flavor.

Bone or No Bone?

A whole bone-in ham delivers the best flavor, texture, and value. We prefer to boil whole hams before baking them to speed up the cooking time and keep them moist. A semiboneless ham has a portion of the bone removed for easier carving and cooks much faster than a bone-in ham. Many semiboneless hams come presliced or "spiral cut," which makes for easier slicing. Be sure to wrap a spiral-cut ham in aluminum foil or a roasting bag before cooking to lock in the ham's moisture. Boneless hams are reshaped in a machine, which can affect the texture; choose one that has the natural shape of the leg, which indicates that there was less manipulation.

Whole Ham or Half Ham?

Most whole hams range from 10 to 20 pounds. Supermarkets also carry half hams from either the shank (the narrow tapered end) or the butt or sirloin (the fatter, rounder end). A shank-end ham is easier to carve, while a sirloin-end ham is meatier. —Hunter Lewis



ESCAROLE WITH PROSCIUTTO

SERVES 4

Fried slices of prosciutto provide a crisp contrast to sautéed escarole.

Kosher salt, to taste

- 2 large heads escarole or chicory, tough outer leaves discarded, inner leaves roughly chopped
- 5 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 thin slices prosciutto, serrano, or country ham (see page 106), torn into strips
- 2 oz. finely chopped cooked ham (any variety will do)
- 6 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1/2 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

1 Bring an 8-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Add escarole; cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Drain escarole, reserving 1/4 cup cooking liquid; transfer to a bowl. Heat 1 tbsp. oil in a 12" skillet over high heat. Add prosciutto strips; cook, flipping once, until crisp, about 1 minute. Use a slotted spoon to transfer prosciutto to paper towels; set aside. Add cooked ham to skillet; cook, stirring, until browned, about 5 minutes. Add reserved cooking liquid and scrape up any browned bits. Pour liquid into a bowl; set aside.

2 Heat the skillet over medium-high heat, add the remaining olive oil along with the garlic and the chiles, and cook for 30 seconds. Add the escarole, reserved ham, and cooking liquid and cook until hot, 2-3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Stir in the lemon juice. Garnish the escarole with the prosciutto.



SCHINKENSTEAKS MIT HASELNUSS-SOSSE

(Ham Steaks with Hazelnut Sauce)

SERVES 2-4

The sauce in this dish, based on a recipe in Mimi Sheraton's *The German Cookbook* (Random House, 1965), is enriched with hazelnuts and brandy.

- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 white onions, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- 2 1/4"-thick cooked ham steaks, smoked or unsmoked
- 1/4 cup apple brandy
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 3 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1/2 cup hazelnuts, toasted and finely ground
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 6 tbsp. dried bread crumbs
- 4 sprigs rosemary
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped chives

1 Heat oven to 400°. Grease an 11" x 14 1/2" baking pan with 1 tbsp. butter. Arrange onions on bottom; bake until soft, about 15 minutes. Set aside.

2 Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Working in 2 batches, sear ham steaks, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate. Add brandy to skillet; return to high heat. Cook, scraping up any browned bits, until brandy has almost evaporated, about 1 minute. Add cream and mustard; cook for 2 minutes. Add hazelnuts and season with salt and pepper; pour sauce over reserved onions. Place steaks on top of onions. Melt remaining butter and combine with bread crumbs; coat tops of steaks with crumbs; arrange rosemary on top. Bake until hot, about 15 minutes. Garnish with chives.



PINEAPPLE-CHIPOTLE-GLAZED HAM

SERVES 14-20

The New York City-based cookbook author Zarela Martinez gave us the recipe for this smoky, chipotle-spiked, Coca-Cola-glazed ham. To cut slices of fresh pineapple into perfect circles, use a 3" round cookie cutter to trim the outer edges and a 1" round one to cut out the center.

- 1 12-15-lb. whole semiboneless ham (see page 106)
- 8 fresh or canned pineapple slices
- 64 whole cloves
- 2 3/4 cups Coca-Cola
- 2 chipotle peppers in adobo, drained and finely chopped
- 1/3 cup honey

1 Put ham into a 16-qt. pot; cover with water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer for 1 hour.

2 Heat oven to 350°. Transfer ham to a rack in a roasting pan. Using toothpicks, secure pineapple to ham; stud with cloves. Pour 2 cups Coca-Cola over ham; pour 1 cup water into pan. Cover loosely with foil; bake for 1 hour.

3 Meanwhile, combine the remaining Coca-Cola, chipotles, and honey in a 2-qt. saucepan; boil. Reduce the heat to medium; cook, stirring the glaze, until syrupy, 12-15 minutes. Uncover the ham; brush with some of the glaze. Increase oven to 500°. Bake the ham, brushing occasionally with glaze, until browned and glossy, 15-20 minutes. Let cool for 20 minutes before carving.



TERRINE DE JAMBON PERSILLÉ

(Ham and Parsley Terrine)

SERVES 6-8

This dish, a specialty from the Burgundy region of France, makes for an elegant holiday appetizer or lunch.

- 2 small onions, peeled and studded with 3 cloves each
- 3/4 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves, stems reserved
- 10 black peppercorns
- 4 unsmoked ham hocks (about 4 lbs.)
- 3 carrots, halved crosswise
- 2 ribs celery, halved crosswise
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 fresh thyme sprigs
- 1 750-ml bottle dry white wine
- 1 oz. gelatin
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 3/4 lb. unsmoked cooked ham, cut into 3/4" cubes
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped

1 Put onions, parsley stems, peppercorns, hocks, carrots, celery, bay leaves, thyme, wine, and 9 cups water into an 8-qt. pot; boil. Lower heat to medium-low; simmer for 2 1/2 hours. Strain broth through a coffee filter-lined sieve into a 2-qt. pan; boil until reduced to 4 cups. Chill 1 1/2 cups broth and sprinkle in gelatin; let rest 10 minutes without stirring. Whisk gelatin mixture into remaining broth and season with salt; chill until aspic just begins to set, 8-12 minutes.

2 Combine chopped parsley leaves, ham, shallots, and garlic in a bowl. Line a 1 1/2-qt. terrine mold (see page 106) with plastic wrap; add ham mixture. Pour in reserved aspic. Cover with plastic wrap; place a rectangular piece of

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cardboard, cut to fit inside rim, on top of terrine. Place 3 unopened soup cans on top; chill terrine until set, 1–2 days. To serve, uncover terrine and lift out of mold. Invert onto a cutting board; slice and serve with Dijon mustard, bread, and cornichons, if you like.



COUNTRY HAM BISCUITS

MAKES 12 BISCUITS

This recipe comes from the Old Chickahominy House in Williamsburg, Virginia. Unlike most Southern biscuits, these are rolled thin to allow the flavor of the country ham to shine.

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 4 tbsp. lard or butter
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 4 oz. thinly sliced cooked country ham or ham of choice

Heat oven to 425°. Sift flour into a large bowl; mix in lard until the mixture has the consistency of cornmeal. Using a wooden spoon, stir in buttermilk to form a dough. Transfer dough to a floured work surface; knead briefly until smooth. Roll dough into a ¼"-thick rectangle. Cut dough into twelve 4" x 3" rectangles; transfer to a baking sheet. Bake until golden brown, about 15–20 minutes. Cool slightly. To serve, slice biscuits and stuff with ham.



MACARONI AND CHEESE

SERVES 8–10

Ham and blue cheese give a piquant

bite to this rich casserole, which comes from Crabtree's Kittle House, a restaurant in Chappaqua, New York.

- 11 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 12 oz. rigatoni
- 2 slices crustless white bread
- 2 tsp. finely chopped thyme
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- ½ cup flour
- 3 cups milk
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 12 oz. grated sharp cheddar
- 8 oz. roughly chopped cooked ham (any variety will do)
- 3 oz. blue cheese, crumbled
- ½ cup minced flat-leaf parsley
- ¼ tsp. hot sauce, such as Tabasco
- 4 scallions, finely chopped
- ¼ freshly ground black pepper
- ⅛ freshly ground nutmeg

- 1 Grease a 2-qt. baking pan with 1 tbsp. butter; set aside. Bring a 6-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta; cook until al dente. Drain pasta, rinse; set aside. Pulse bread into crumbs in

food processor; mix with 4 tbsp. butter; set aside.

- 2 Heat oven to 400°. Melt remaining butter in a 6-qt. pot over medium heat. Add thyme and onions; cook until soft, 6–8 minutes. Whisk in flour; cook 2–3 minutes. Whisk in milk and cream. Increase heat to medium-high; cook, whisking, until thick, 10–12 minutes. Whisk in salt, cheddar, ham, blue cheese, parsley, hot sauce, scallions, pepper, and nutmeg. Stir in pasta; add to pan; sprinkle with bread crumbs. Bake until bubbly, 30–40 minutes.



GARGANELLI WITH PEAS AND PROSCIUTTO

SERVES 4–6

This creamy dish calls for quill-shaped

garganelli, though penne will work just as well.

Kosher salt, to taste

- 1 lb. garganelli or penne
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1½ cups fresh or frozen peas
- ½ cup grated Parmesan
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 4 oz. thinly sliced prosciutto, serrano, or country ham, torn into strips
- 1 cup fresh mint leaves, torn

- 1 Bring a 6-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook until al dente. Drain pasta, reserving ¼ cup pasta water.

- 2 Meanwhile, boil the cream in a 12" skillet over high heat until reduced by half, about 8 minutes. Add the pasta with the peas and cook, tossing occasionally, until the sauce begins to cling to the pasta, about 2 minutes. Add the Parmesan, and season with salt and pepper. Add the reserved pasta water as needed to loosen the sauce. Fold in the prosciutto and mint.

3 HAM HORS D'OEUVRES

Mini roll-ups, or *involtini* (below left), of ham and vegetables can be prepared in advance and heated at the last minute. They offer a great way to use up leftover pieces of thinly sliced cooked ham or prosciutto. Trim ends from 3 medium zucchinis. Using a knife or a Japanese-style mandoline, slice zucchini lengthwise into twelve ⅛"-thick strips. Rub zucchini with 2 tbsp. olive oil; season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Grill or broil zucchini strips, flipping once, until browned and soft, about 6 minutes; let cool slightly. Lay a long, thin piece of ham on top of a zucchini slice; place an equal-size piece of mozzarella or provolone over the prosciutto. Roll zucchini, ham, and cheese into a tight spiral and skewer shut with toothpick. Repeat to make 12 rolls in all. Broil or grill until hot. Serves 4.

Purée as part of a creamy mousse, ham gives these **deviled eggs** (below middle) a distinctive, savory character and a beautiful pink hue. Boil 12 eggs until hard-cooked;

chill in ice water. Peel eggs and halve lengthwise; separate yolks and whites and chill both. In a small bowl, combine ¼ cup chicken broth with ⅛ oz. gelatin; let rest for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, melt ½ tsp. unsalted butter in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Whisk in ½ tsp. flour to make a paste. Whisk in another ¼ cup chicken broth; cook until mixture thickens, 1–2 minutes. Remove pan from heat; whisk in reserved gelatin mixture, ¾ tsp. Dijon mustard, and ½ tsp. sherry to make a sauce. In the bowl of a food processor, finely chop 4 oz. cooked ham; add sauce, reserved yolks, ⅛ tsp. paprika, ⅛ tsp. cayenne, and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Purée until smooth; scrape mousse through a fine sieve into a large bowl and discard solids. In a medium bowl, whip ½ cup heavy cream to soft peaks. Fold cream into mousse; chill. Spoon mousse into a pastry bag fitted with a star tip; pipe into reserved egg whites and garnish with chervil leaves. Serves 6.

Ham, cream cheese, and red pepper jelly canapés (left) are ultra-simple, elegant snacks served by home cooks in the American South. We recommend chopping the ham in a food processor. Spread a water cracker with 1 tsp. softened cream cheese, sprinkle with 1 tsp. finely chopped cooked ham (smoked or unsmoked), and top with ½ tsp. red pepper jelly. Garnish with a pinch of finely chopped fresh chives. Repeat to make desired number of canapés.



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With an approach that is equal parts mad scientist and kitchen classicist, chef **WYLIE DUFRESNE** has turned his acclaimed New York City restaurant, wd-50, into an international epicenter of avant-garde cooking. Today, the recipient of multiple James Beard Awards, *Top Chef* Master, and student of John-Georges Vongerichten and the Spanish molecular gastronomist Ferran Adrià, continues to make his name by combining technology and imaginative ingredients to create unexpected new dishes and flavors. We spoke with Dufresne recently about the importance of a cook's curiosity, the peculiar charms of pumpernickel, and teaching his daughter to churn butter.



JOYCE GEORGE

You're known for your meticulous, scientific approach in the kitchen. How did you get interested in molecular gastronomy?

In the beginning, I was really just looking for answers. I'd worked for some really talented chefs and I knew how to cook, but I didn't know why I was doing things. For instance, I knew there were a thousand ways to cook an egg. But I wanted to know what it was made of and what was happening to each component as heat was applied to it. At the end of the day, my goal as a chef is always to have a deeper understanding of an ingredient, to apply creativity to it, and hopefully come up with a way of cooking that's a new contribution to the culinary world.

What's one cold-weather ingredient that you're excited by now?

We just added an incredible pumpernickel soup to our menu that's a combination of great winter tastes. The world is full of soup recipes that use bread as the main ingredient or as a thickener, but I wanted to come up with my own version. I started with pumpernickel because it is one of my favorites. Then we built the rest of the soup around that ingredient: since pumpernickel and rye are often paired with smoked fish, for instance, we went around the corner from wd-50 and got smoked sablefish from Russ & Daughters. Then the soup needed some acidity, and since citrus fruit is coming into season, we added a purée of blood oranges to brighten it. Finally, we introduced some Gruyère cheese, because melted, cooked cheese is a classic pairing for dark bread.



You're a new father—congratulations! What meals are you most looking forward to making for your family?

Sometimes I think I won't cook at home anymore because I don't have the same equipment, and I have to do the dishes. It just doesn't always bring the same sort of satisfaction as restaurant cooking. That said, my wife did have a baby recently, and I was home for a few weeks cooking meals for them. It was amazing because I was cooking for people I love deeply. Now I can't wait to teach my daughter how to churn butter, make a burger, and shuck oysters.

PUMPERNICKEL SOUP, SMOKED SABLE, BLOOD ORANGE, AND GRUYÈRE

SERVES 4

FOR THE SOUP

- 120** grams toasted pumpernickel bread
- 1** small onion, sliced
- 800** grams water
- 10** grams butter
- 120** grams smoked sablefish loin, diced

FOR THE FRICO

- 100** grams Gruyère cheese

FOR THE BLOOD ORANGE PURÉE

- 2½** grams agar agar
- 200** grams blood orange juice, strained and refrigerated

FOR THE GARNISH

- 10** celery leaves, clipped with scissors

1 Melt the butter in a sauté pan and sweat the onions until lightly caramelized. Meanwhile, crush the toasted pumpernickel and add to onions, stir to combine, add water, and bring to a simmer. Remove from heat, cool, and let sit overnight in a refrigerator.

2 Grate the Gruyère cheese onto a Silpat® in a thin layer. Toast in a 325° oven until no longer pliable. Cool and break into shards.

3 Using a blender, mix the agar agar into the blood orange juice. Place the mixture in a pot and bring to a boil. Simmer for 5 minutes and pour into a shallow container and chill. Once solid, break into pieces and place in a blender. Purée until smooth, and reserve.

4 To serve: Pipe or spread some orange purée into the bottom of each of four bowls. Place a small pile of diced sablefish in one corner of each bowl. Gently pour the soup over the purée, being careful to keep the diced sable in a pile. Top the fish with the shards of frico and clipped celery leaves.

IN THE SAVEUR KITCHEN

Discoveries and Techniques from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman



Myriad Tastes

The Indian state of Gujarat is home to one of the world's most complex and nuanced vegetarian cuisines (see "Flavor's Realm," page 60). Some of the vegetables found in a typical market in Gujarat are familiar to Westerners; others are lesser known, even to cooks in other parts of India. Here is a glossary of popular Gujarati produce. The fruity, tangy flavor of **tomatoes** ① embodies the sweet-sour quality cherished in Gujarati cooking. **Turmeric** ② imparts a bright yellow color and a musky undertone to dishes such as the *khandvi* on page 74. **Fulaver**, or **cauliflower** ③, originally a British import, lends its brawny texture to dishes such as *fulaver nu shaak*, a Gujarati dry-cooked curry. **Ratalu**, or **purple yam** ④, is beloved for its earthy flavor and striking hue; in Gujarat you'll often find it sliced and fried in peanut oil. Tangy **fenugreek leaves** ⑤, called *methi*, are often added to breads. **Valor beans** ⑥ are similar to sugar snap peas. **Cluster beans** ⑦, known as *guvar*, are often used in curries. **Parval** ⑧ look like tiny, plump zucchini and taste delicious sautéed with curry leaves and garlic. Some Gujarati dishes acquire a pleasing bitterness from **bitter melon** ⑨, locally known as *karela*. **Bottle gourd** ⑩, or *dudhi*, has a subtle, squash-like flavor. Small **Indian onions** ⑪, or *kanda*, are sweet enough to eat raw. **Okra** ⑫ is loved for its meaty texture and taste. **Kakadi** ⑬ is a South Asian variety of cucumber. Small eggplants known as **ringan** ⑭ are wonderful cooked whole in a sweet-spicy masala. Mild-tasting, watery **snake gourds** ⑮ are delicious cooked with cumin seeds and ginger. The Indian chile known as **machu** ⑯ provides a sharp heat. Aromatic **curry leaves** ⑰, known in Gujarat as *limdo*, are used as an aromatic in legume and vegetable dishes. **Potatoes** ⑱ are often steamed. The small gourds called **tin-dora** ⑲ are used in a number of dry-cooked curries. **Marcha chiles** ⑳ are about as hot as poblano chiles. **Elephant's foot yam** ㉑, called *suran*, is often used to add heft to curries. Tough-shelled **moringa pods** ㉒, also called drumsticks, are valued for their earthy-tasting pulp. One of the most widely used aromatics in Gujarati cooking is *adu*, or **ginger** ㉓. —Vikram Doctor

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DISCOVER WHERE THEY'VE BEEN...

Our board members travel every inch of the globe to bring you the best in culinary destinations. Here, we highlight some of their most recent trips:



SANDEE LITWIN just came back from the One & Only Palmilla Resort, having stayed in a pool villa. Heaven! Only thing better was the food, including some of the best sushi we have ever eaten.



STACY LUKS just returned from Vietnam, Malaysia, and Singapore. All three are fascinatingly diverse and perfect for immersing oneself in the cultures of Asia. And for the culinary-minded travelers—the street cuisine is to die for!



BOB MALMBERG is just back from a fabulous cruise on the Silverseas liner *Silver Wind*, sailing from Monte Carlo through the Mediterranean for 11 days.



LAURIE SACZAWA visited the northern Rhône appellation of Côte-Rôtie, France ("the roasted slope"). With its steep terraced Syrah vineyards and hours of sun, it is easy to understand the origin of the name!



DIANE WILKINSON adored lodge-hopping and outdoor BBQs on her trip to Africa. She continued on to Italy and, when in Rome...dined as they do, thanks to friends at Portrait Suites. Now, off to Morocco!



STACY WEIGANT just returned from the vibrant Victoria Market on the Seychelles island of Mahé, a fantastic outdoor Saturday morning shopping experience.

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A Bowl of Good Luck



HOPPIN' JOHN SOUP

SERVES 8-10

- 1 lb. dried black-eyed peas
- 1 smoked ham bone or two hocks
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 1/2 cup finely chopped cooked ham
- 1/4 tsp. red chile flakes
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 jalapeño, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 large carrot, finely chopped
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1 rib celery, finely chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 lb. collard greens, ribs removed, leaves roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 5 cups cooked long-grain white rice
- Chopped tomatoes and scallions, for garnish

WORKING ON OUR feature "The Wonders of Ham" (page 78), I came across a lot of recipes not just for holiday roasts but also for terrific dishes made with all that ham you didn't eat the first time around (see "Lovely Leftovers," below). My favorite has got to be hoppin' John, a humble dish of black-eyed peas and rice, sometimes served with collard greens, that's typically eaten on New Year's Day and is said to bring good luck. There's no consensus on how this specialty—adored in much of the South—got its name, but the food is likely a descendant of similar, Afro-Caribbean dishes that make use of field peas or other legumes. Most recipes I've seen call for flavoring the rice and peas with bacon or fatback, but I'm fonder of using a leftover ham bone and ham scraps to make a more souplike, all-in-one version that can be ladled over rice. I can't think of a more comforting antidote to all those holiday feasts. —*Hunter Lewis*

① Bring peas, ham bone, and 8 cups water to a boil in a 6-qt. Dutch oven. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, skimming foam occasionally, until peas are tender, about 45 minutes. Drain peas, reserving 1 cup cooking liquid along with ham bone; set aside.

② Heat oil in a 12-qt. pot over medium-high heat. Add chopped ham, chiles, garlic, jalapeños, carrot, onion, celery, and bay leaf and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 8 minutes. Add reserved black-eyed peas, ham bone, and reserved cooking liquid, along with collards and 12 cups water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until collards are tender, about 1 hour. Stir in vinegar and season with salt and pepper. Spoon rice into bowls and ladle soup over rice and add garnishes.

Lovely Leftovers

A whole, bone-in ham is a magnificent thing, not least because of all the delicious things you can make using the bone and leftover pieces of meat that are too small to be served on their own. Here are four of our favorite ham-enhanced dishes. ① Simmer a ham bone with split peas to make a silky soup; garnish it with fried bits of leftover ham. ② Cook kale in a flavorful broth made by simmering a ham bone and an onion in water for an hour or so. ③ Use sliced ham to turn a snack of ramen noodles into a meal. ④ Adding a ham bone to polenta as it cooks yields rich results. —*H.L.*



SAVEUR MENU

SAVEUR's guide to EVENTS, PROMOTIONS & PRODUCTS

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Ham Carving

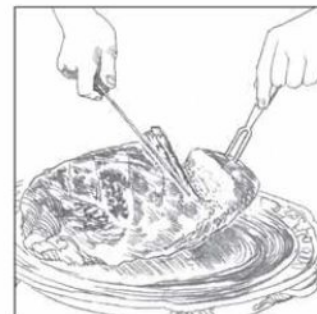
A whole, bone-in ham, like the ones called for in the recipes starting on page 95, makes for a magnificent holiday roast, but many home cooks shy away from a whole bone-in cut because they think that carving around the bone, which runs the length of a ham from the narrow shank end all the way to the thick butt end, is not worth the effort. Though it's not as simple as slicing a boneless ham, it isn't hard to produce elegant slices from a whole ham. The six steps below are easy to master. —H.L.



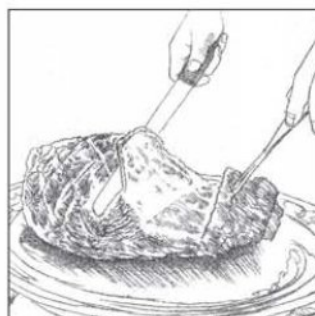
1 Carve $\frac{1}{4}$ " of meat off bottom of ham so that it will sit flat when flipped over. Flip ham. Working about 4" from shank end, make a vertical cut down to the bone.



2 Make a 45-degree diagonal cut about 2" away from the first cut to make a V. Carve to the bone to release the wedge of ham.



3 Working at the same angle as the initial diagonal cut, begin making even, $\frac{1}{8}$ "-thick slices, cutting to the bone and working your way toward the thick end.



4 Transfer slices to a platter as you go, continuing to carve at a diagonal until you've reached about a third of the way to the thick end of the roast.



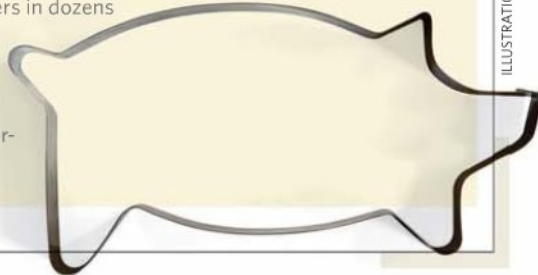
5 Now begin carving at a new angle, slicing from the side of the ham closest to you inward toward the center of ham and down to the bone to create thin half slices.



6 Repeat the above step on the opposite side of the ham, then switch back, until you have released most of the meat from the bone.

Folk Art

Making gingerbread cookies is a time-honored custom at Christmastime in Sweden (see "A Sweet Tradition," page 50), and most families have a collection of cookie cutters reserved just for the purpose. In fact, Swedish home bakers take cookie cutters almost as seriously as they do the cookies themselves, collecting them in many shapes. Several of those shapes are endowed with a specific meaning or history, often rooted in ancient pagan rites. One popular form, the pig (below), harks back to the midwinter celebration called Jultfest, when a boar was sometimes sacrificed in hopes of ensuring a mild winter and an early spring. Other beloved shapes include the goat (which was traditionally the bringer of presents), the horse (which symbolizes Sweden itself), and various folkloric characters. But that's just the beginning; go to the Skansen, Stockholm's open-air history museum, in the weeks before Christmas and you'll find vendors selling cookie cutters in dozens of traditional forms. The Skansen museum store sells cutters online and ships them abroad (see THE PAN-TRY, page 106, for more information). Peruse its wares to build your own collection and give your lonely gingerbread man some lively company. —Ben Mims



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THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered food products and destinations too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY BEN MIMS

Fare

Purchase Tom and Jerry **serving sets** (see page 15) from Tias.com (210/595-7307; www.tias.com). To make the banana-coconut packets (see page 16), purchase **frozen banana leaves** (\$4.99 for a 16-ounce pack; pictured below), **coco-nut cream** (\$3.89 for a 16.9-ounce box), and **short-grain sticky rice** (\$8.99 for a 5-pound bag) from Temple of Thai (877/811-8773; www.templeofthai.com). To find a retailer selling **2003 Croft Vintage Porto** (see page 16), go

to www.vinaioimports.com; **Los Danzantes Reposado** from Craft Distillers (\$72; 800/782-8145; www.craftdistillers.com); **Sombra** from Sombra Oaxaca (\$49; 970/274-8798; www.sombraoaxaca.com); and **Del Maguey Chichicapa** (\$70), **Tobalá** (\$125), and **Pechuga** (\$200) from Del Maguey, Ltd. Co. (575/758-1211; www.mezcal.com).

Sweden

To make the gingerbread cookies (see page 58) and peppermint caramels (see

a 14-ounce bag); to make the curried cauliflower with tomatoes (see page 74), buy **black mustard seeds** (\$6.99 for a 4-ounce pack) and **asafetida** (\$4.49 for a 50-gram container); to make the spiced chickpea-flour snacks (see page 74), buy **fresh curry leaves** (\$5.99 for a .5-ounce pack); to make the batter-fried peppers and bananas (see page 76), buy **black salt** (\$2.99 for a 4-ounce pack; pictured below); to make the sweet and sour dal (see page 76), purchase **dry toor dal** (\$5.99 for a 14-ounce bag), **ghee** (\$8.99 for an 8-ounce jar), **fenugreek seeds** (\$5.99 for a 4-ounce pack), **jaggery** (\$6.99 for a 7-ounce bag), and **tamarind concentrate** (\$9.99 for a 14-ounce jar). All products are available from Kalustyan's (see above).

Ham

To buy **Smithfield hams** (see page 78), contact Smithfield (800/926-8448; www.smithfieldhams.com). To buy **Edwards hams**, contact S. Wallace Edwards & Sons (800/222-4267; www.virginiatradiations.com). Buy **speck** from Buon Italia (\$14.85 per pound; 212/633-9090; www.buonitalia.com), **culatello** from Salumeria Biellese (\$14.50 per pound; 212/736-7376; www.salumeriabiellese.com), **serranoham** from Esposito's Meat Market (\$21.98 per pound; 212/279-3298), **country ham** from Smithfield or Edwards (see above), **spiral ham** from HoneyBaked Ham (\$33.95–\$113.95 for a quarter, half, or whole ham; 800/343-4267; www.honeybakedmailorder.com), **jambon de Paris** from Agata & Valentina (\$10.99 per pound; 212/452-0690; www.agatavalentina.com), **canned ham** from Schaul's Signature Gourmet Foods (\$42.95 for a 5-pound ham; 800/562-5660; www.schauls.com), **tasso ham**

from O. Ottomanelli & Sons (\$9.99 per pound; 212/675-4217), and **picnic** or "cottage" ham from Old World Meats (\$12.99 for a 2-pound ham; 216/383-1262; www.oldworldmeats.com). To make the Savannah country ham (see page 95), use **blackstrap molasses**, available from Natural Grocers (\$5.25 for a 15-ounce bottle; 800/817-9415; www.naturalgrocers.com). To make the apricot-ginger glazed ham (see page 95) and the pineapple-chipotle-glazed ham (see page 96), purchase **semiboneless smoked ham** from Chef's Pride (\$45.53 for a 14.5-pound whole ham, \$28.65 for an 8–9-pound half ham; 800/878-1800; www.chefspride.com). To make the ham and parsley terrine (see page 96), use a **1½-qt. terrine mold** (pictured at left) from Sur La Table (\$139.95; 800/243-0852; www.surlatable.com).

Kitchen

To buy **Gujarati produce** (see page 101), contact Melissa's/World Variety Produce (800/588-0151; www.melissas.com), Patel Brothers (773/262-7777; www.patelbros.com), and Rajbhog Foods Inc. (888/725-2464; www.rajbhog.com). Buy Swedish **cookie cutters** (see page 104) from Skansen Museum Shop (46/8/442-8050; www.skansenbutikense.se).

Sweepstakes

For a chance to win a **hickory-smoked Edwards ham**, enter the "Win This" sweepstakes, sponsored by SAVEUR, at www.saveur.com/win, between November 10 and December 7, 2009. Contest open to residents of United States and District of Columbia ages 18 and older. No purchase necessary; void where prohibited by law. For complete official rules, see our website.



to www.wine-searcher.com. To plan a trip to **Vermont** (see page 22), contact Vermont tourism (800/837-6668; www.travel-vermont.com).

Reporter

Travel to Basel for Fasnacht (see page 32): **Swiss International Air Lines** (877/359-7947; www.swiss.com) offers direct flights from several U.S. cities to Zurich, an hour by train from Basel. **Ramada Plaza Basel** (Messeplatz 12, 4058 Basel; 41/61/560-4000; www.ramada.com) offers comfortable, quiet lodging near Basel's old city. For more information on Fasnacht, contact **Basel Tourism** (41/61/268-6868; www.basel.com).

Drink

To sample mezcals (see page 42), purchase **Los Amantes Reposado** from Vinaio Imports (\$64.99; 718/842-7201;

page 59), use **Lyle's golden syrup**, available from Kalustyan's (\$10.99 for a 454-gram tin; 800/352-3451; www.kalustyans.com). To make the chocolate truffles (see page 58), use **unsweetened fine shredded dried coconut**, available from Kalustyan's (\$6.99 for an 8-ounce bag; see above). To make the almond-cream tartlets (see page 59), buy **frozen lingonberries** from Kings Norsk Products (\$12.00 for 1 pound; 303/422-3394; www.kingsnorsk.com); **vanilla sugar**, also available from Kalustyan's (\$5.99 for an ounce; see above); and **1⅞" x 1⅜" oval fluted petit four molds** (pictured above) from Kerekes Bakery & Restaurant Equipment Inc. (\$1.25 each; 800/525-5556; www.bakedeco.com).

Gujarat

To make the okra in yogurt (see page 74), purchase **chickpea flour** (\$6.99 for

CHRISTMAS IN SWEDEN

To plan a trip to Sweden for the Christmas holidays, fly Scandinavian Airlines (800/221-2350; www.flysas.com). Book a room at the Grand Hotel (\$360–\$1,454 for a double; Södra Blasieholmshamnen 8, 103 27 Stockholm; 46/8/679-3500; www.grandhotel.se), located in the heart of Stockholm with views over the harbor and of the royal palace. Take part in Christmas festivities at the world's largest outdoor folklore museum, Stiftelsen Skansen (46/8/442-8000; www.skansen.se/eng/). Visit Vete-Katten bakery (Kungsgatan 55, 111 22 Stockholm; 46/8/208-405; www.vetekatten.se) to sample its **pepparkakor**, featured on page 58, and other traditional Swedish holiday pastries.

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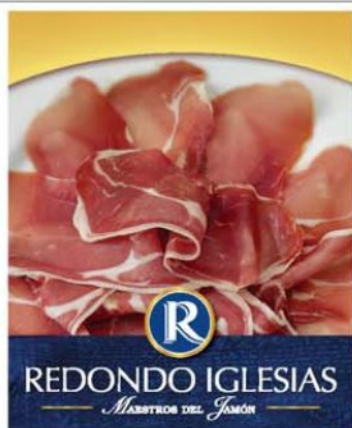
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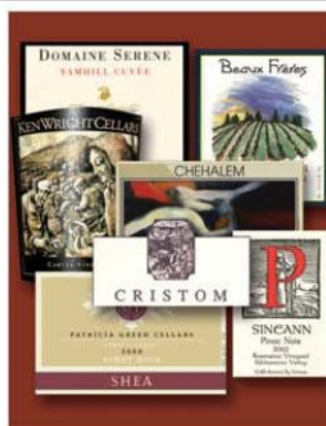


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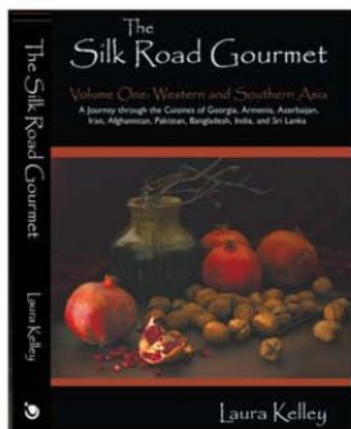
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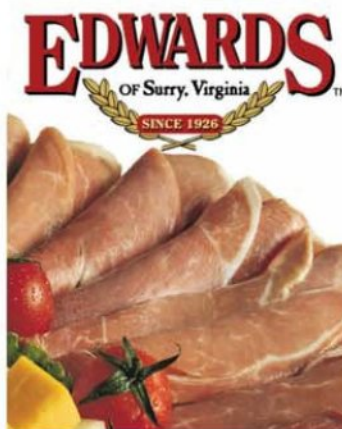
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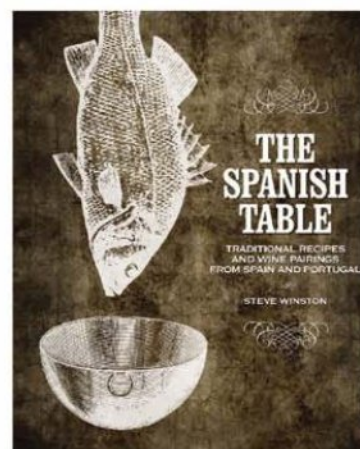


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MOMENT



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PLACE Budapest, Hungary

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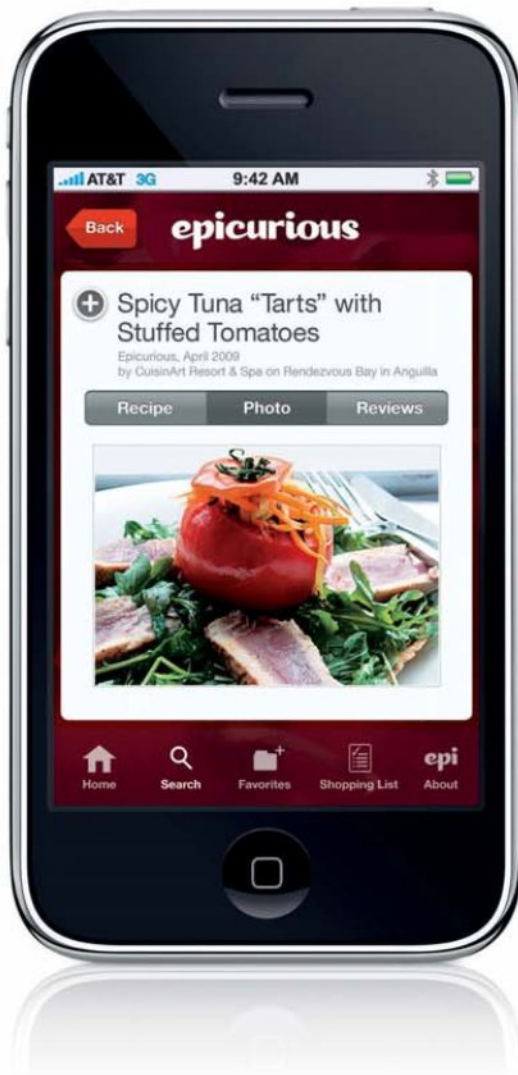
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Free • Planning a dinner party? Or just want to whip up a quick weeknight meal? With over 30,000 recipes – including favorites from the country's top chefs – Epicurious puts the ultimate cookbook in your pocket.



Grocery iQ

\$0.99 • Tackle the grocery store with more than pen and paper. Quickly create custom shopping lists drawn from a 130,000 item database, then organize the list by aisle so you can zip to the checkout stand.



Locavore

\$2.99 • Whether it's summer sweet corn or fall persimmons, Locavore finds out what's in season and available at your nearby farmers' markets. Cooking with locally sourced food has never been easier.



Smart Chef

\$0.99 • If you've already begun cooking and discover you're out of an ingredient, don't worry. Easily find substitutions for those items you thought you had in the pantry and save yourself a trip to the store.



Fromage

\$2.99 • From truffled Gouda to Gruyère Premier Cru, Fromage provides an expert guide to over 650 cheeses from around the world. Record tasting impressions and even get suggestions on wine-pairings.

Want help planning dinner? Finding what's in season? Pairing a wine? With over 85,000 apps on the App Store, there's an app for just about anything. Only on the iPhone and the nation's fastest 3G network.



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